15 Sue 46 | 53 Navember / December 2001 | 53

\*Noam Chomsky

Art & Design



I lived with the system and took no offense until Chomsky\* lent me the necessary sense.

loves to the time of the "Marriffered Source" by the Clark







limited adition cover 3 of 4

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08 MAIL

16 COLUMNS

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Jaime Hernandez

Gee Vaucher

Elliott Earls

Nikki McClure

Pond Gallery

Sadie Shaw

Jocelyn Superstar & Little Miss Attitude

r EL

merge Crazy,

t.con

Jay Ryan

Shepard Fairey

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138 Music

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NIKKI MCCLURE





SHEPARD FAIREY



JAIME HERNANDEZ

#### **Planeteers**

**Daniel Sinker** 

Joel Schalit Chris Ziegler work too hard

**Eric Action** Scott Yahtzee are attentive listeners

Leah Ryan tells stories out of school

Shawn Kruggel reads good

Jessica Hopper puts our name in a .sig

Dan Sinker Marianna Levant Frol Boundin **Dustin Mertz** Michael Coleman keep it real

Nikki McClure Jay Ryan **Shepard Fairey** Jaime Hernandez did the covers

Quanah Humphreys Charlie Bertsch Matt Owens Ryan J. Downey Kari Lydersen Andy Cornell

Russell Etchen Charlie Bertsch Bill Mitthoefler Heather Rogers Joe Lockard Steven Wishnia contributing writers reviews

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Dana Morse

Josh Kermiet

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**Neal Shah** 

columnists Andrea Anders Andy Slob Art Ettinger Brian Czarnik **Brian Manning** Courtney Knox Dan Laidman

**Punk Planet Reviews** PO Box 6014 East Lansing, MI 48826 send your reviews here

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t probably doesn't come as too much of a shock for you to learn that I write these introductions about an hour before we go to press. That explains the poor grammar, sloppy editing, and general incoherence that sometimes seeps into the intro. It's something I've done since the first issue of *Punk Planet*, and something I'll do 'till the last, because it gives me a chance to fully reflect on the issue as a *process*, not just as a collection of half-finished pieces. Plus, it gives me a good excuse to put something off until the last minute.

Unfortunately, there are also times where writing the introduction serves a different purpose: to talk about what's not in an issue. Due to the complex algebra involved in putting out a bi-monthly magazine, sometimes an event will happen after a no-takebacks point in our production cycle and we just can't turn around an article in time to catch it. Most of the time, that's not a big deal.

This time though, buildings fell, people died, and the drums of war were loudly beaten. In these scant few days since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it seems about as big a deal as one could possibly imagine. And we're running an issue on art. That's how it happens, sometimes. Obviously, our next issue will feature extensive coverage of whatever horror this tragedy becomes.

I certainly don't mean to belittle this issue—not in the least. All of us here at Punk Planet are extremely proud of this belated follow up to our 1998 Art & Design issue. The artists profiled in Art & Design 2 are a diverse and exciting lot and it's been a pleasure and a dream to be able to work with them.

That goes double for the four artists that built our beautiful covers for this issue. Yes, just like *TV Guide*, this issue of *Punk Planet* features four limited edition covers created by artists Nikki McClure, Jay Ryan, Shepard Fairey, and Jaime Hernandez. Each person was given a blank slate to work with and each one came back with a thing of beauty. I am in awe of all of their talents.

Actually, as difficult as it was to put the finishing touches on this issue due to the insanity happening in the world outside the Punk Planet office, being able to come into work each day (and they were *long* days, believe me) to work on this amazing issue offered a little bit of solace from the terrifying uncertainty that each new day brought.

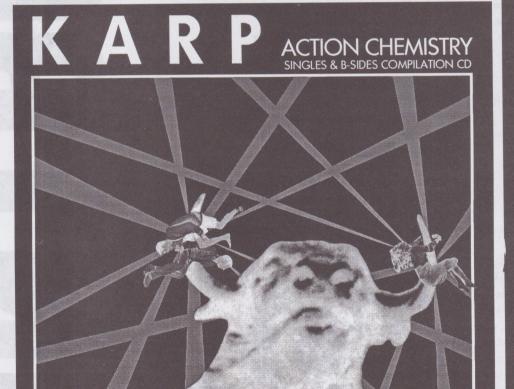
These are scary days, and I hope that reading this issue and looking at the beautiful art collected within it can offer a small sanctuary to you during these frightening times.

In peace,

DAN







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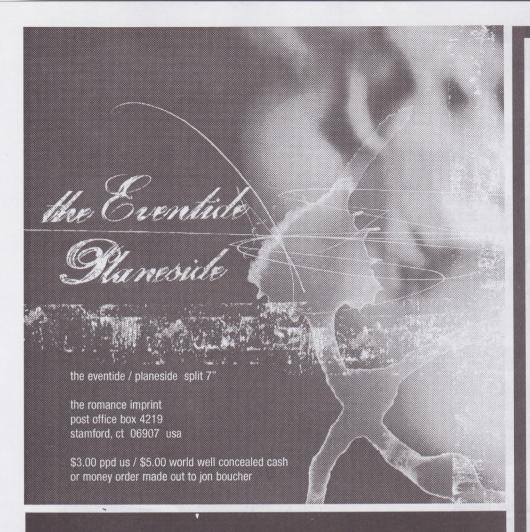
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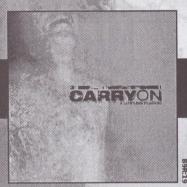
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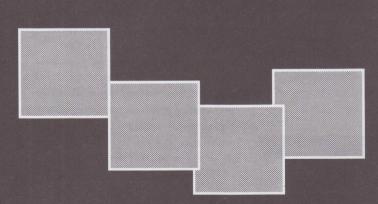
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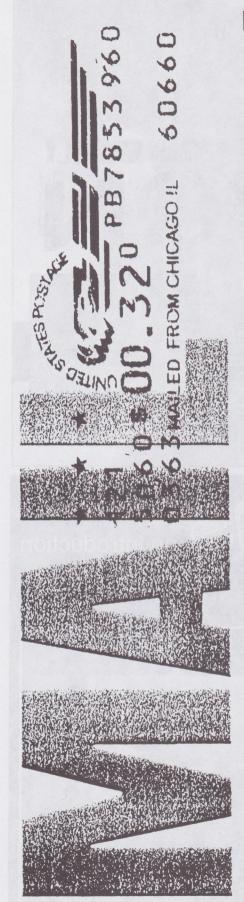
laymen terms an introduction





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an introduction



#### **Fallen Comrades**

Punk Planet-

O—woe are we . . . Blu Magazine is no more! You should see the tears runnin' down our cheeks. (sob) In issue #42 you guys did a kick-ass interview with the folks down at Blu Magazine that only furthered our love for the DIY magazine. With remarkable insights such as, "Artists can best help the cause so to speak, by working on their craft and becoming the best possible artists they can" by the Managing Editor (Pete Mommsen) how can we not fall in love with this authentic grass roots, participatory magazine that is Blu.

So why is Blu finally closing its doors? Money problems. We know punk magazines are having financial snafus of late (we don't have to tell you guys—what w/rising paper costs & all), but to see Blu finally say goodbye to their IO thousand plus readers is a real shame.

What were we to expect? Of course it was going to eventually say goodbye. All good things most come to an end, especially when your manufacturing and shipping out a quality ad-free mag and CD for a fiver. Add to that, the fact that almost everyone at *Blu* were volunteers (an anticapitalist method), and it's a miracle in and of itself that *Blu* lasted for as long as it did.

And before we say farewell, we wanna' clarify one thing. Blu wasn't simply about hip hop/ punk. Rather Blu was all about documenting and promoting a conscious way of living—having both a community and a real spiritual awareness for the grassroots.

Cesar Jay Romero Maximus-tom Kim Shatakshee Stern California

#### We fucked up.

Punk Planet,

If you've wondered what makes many women feel excluded, belittled, and insulted by the punk scene, Brian Czarnik's music reviews in PP44 offer an excellent example. In his reviewer spotlight, Brian asks: "Why do the girls talk

about the St. Pete girls being so fat when the Tampa girls aren't much better?" This kind of misogynist crap is one more piece of evidence that punk rock still mirrors too much of the oppression practiced throughout American society.

While I value each writer's right to expression, I can't help but hold Punk Planet accountable for giving forum to this destructive language. I'm not trying to hold Czarnik up as the image of misogyny, nor am I demanding a policy of censorship from Punk Planet. I'm simply hoping to draw attention to the power of words and the damage they can cause. We are each responsible for the many ways that we uphold patriarchy, and the devastating impact it has on our lives and our community.

Jon Strange Philadelphia, PA

#### Punk: open to definition.

Hey dudes,

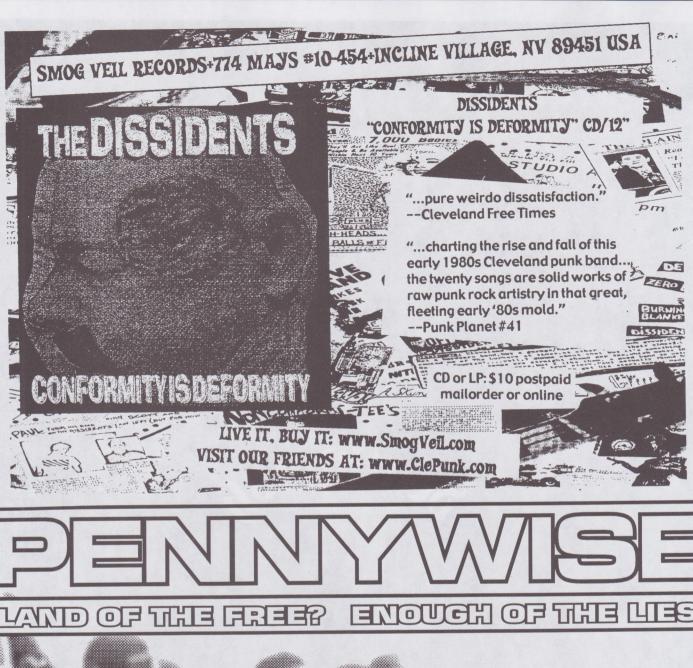
I am soooo tired of people trying to tell me that being punk is about listening to a specific type of music, or being an anarchits, or sporting a mohawk [Letters PP45]. Where did people learn all of that crap. From what I was lead to believe, punk wasn't even ment to be about the music. Most of the old punk was focused more on the message that the band was trying to convey, rather then the quality of music that was being recorded. And Those people who are being "punk" just to look a ceratin way are only buying into the "mainstream" vision of what punk is. And to the Anarchists, I'm sorry but the punk rock industry wouldn't be where it is today if it wasn't for capitolism. From what I was taught being punk was just being who you are and accepting others for the person that they are, not what they look like or the music that they listen to.

Sincerely,

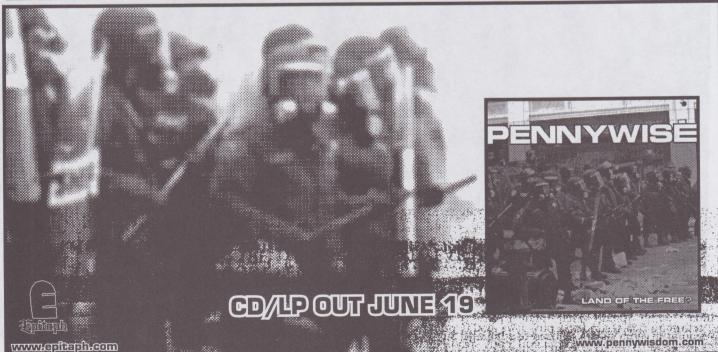
Liam Twomey Portland

Got something on your mind? Please write us!

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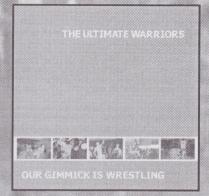




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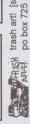
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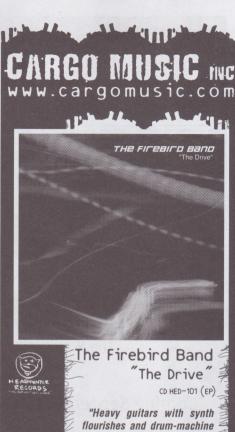
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arti





beats, making for an intriguing electro-emo hybrid."

-Alternative Press





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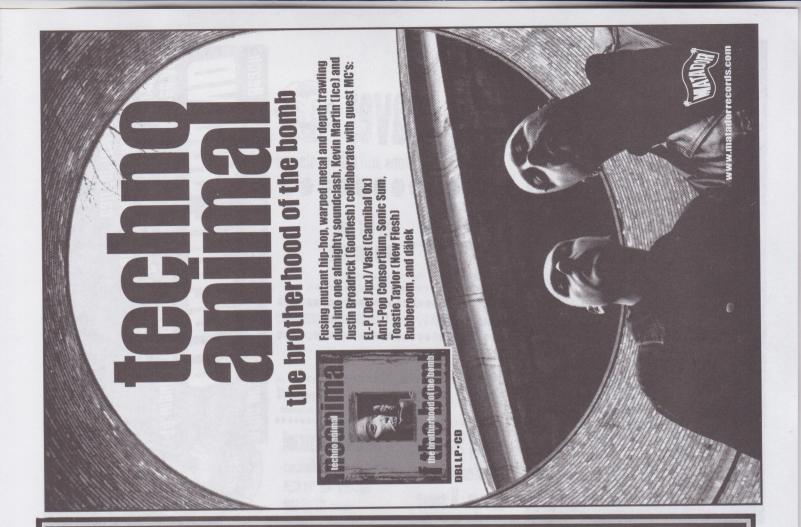
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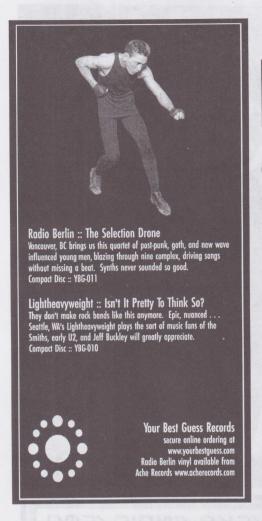
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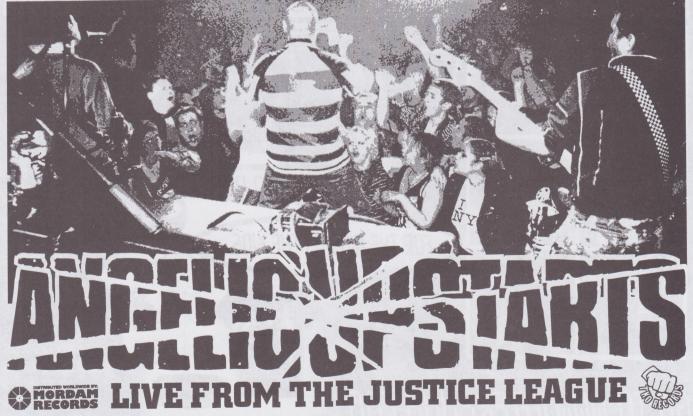
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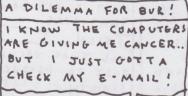


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16 PUNK PLANET







OH CRIPES THE DILEMMAC OF THE MODERN AGE ...! WHAT IF I'M MISSING SIMETHING IMPORTANT ! OH, MY STOMACH .. CANCER? VLCERS? DH. LORD ...





OH MY ... GET OFF MY BACK PEOPLE! YOU GOD DAMN CYBER PUNKS ACT LIKE EVERYTHING SHOULD BE CONVENIENT AND INSTANT! ORDER FROM AMAZON DOT COM IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT! 13.2 T= 1000

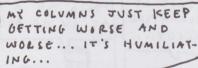
HOW DID THIS PERSON GET MY E MAIL ADDRESS ? WELL, I'M GOING TO WRITE A SCATHING RESPONSE AND MAKE THEM WISH THEY WERE DEAD!













BESIDES, PUNK PLANET IS SUCH A WEIRD MAGAZINE ANYWAY ... I CAN'T RELATE TO IT AT ALL ... IT'S SO GLOSSY + PROFESSIONAL LOOKING ... WHAT ARE THEY WOLNE FOR? I DEN'T GET IT ....



"ART AND DESIUN ISSUE ..." PHEH ... I KNOW IT'S JUST GOING TO BE A BUNCH OF PEOPLE WITH HIGH PAYING COMPUTER JOBS TRYING TO RATIONALIZE THEIR DE-HAVIOR AS "PUNK" ... FUCK THAT!



COMPUTERS ARE NOT PVNK ... I JUST CAN'T BUY PHOTOSHOP AS A TOOL FOR THE REVOLUTION. HE'S "OUT OF STEP HTIN THE WIRLD!"

SAM MEPHEETERS IS RIGHT ABOUT ADBUSTERS BEING A BOURGEOUS COFFEE TABLE MAGAZINE ... BUT LOOK AT THE NEW PUNK PLANET! JESUS, THE PASTEL COLOR SCHEMES! IT MAKES "BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS" LOOK LIKE "MAXIMUM ROCKHROLL!"

SPEAKING OF MAXIMUMROCKNROLL...!
I VISITED THEIR OFFICES RECENTLY,
AND WHAT A SHOCKER THAT WAS!
THE OFFICES OF TIME MAGAZINE
COULD NOT BE MORE STERILE AND
IMMACULATE! AND THE COMPUTERS...

THIS OF POLLOT

CD TOO LOUD FOR

YOU?

PUTTING A
"SMEARED XEROX"
FILTER ON THIS
PHOTO ... AND UPLOADING NEW CUT N' PASTE
PONTS ...

WHAT A LET-DOWN
THAT WAS....

SIGH...

ALL THAT TECHNOLOGY
JUST TO PRODUCE
SOMETHING WITH
A "SKETCHY PUNK"

AESTHETIC ...

NOT A GIVE

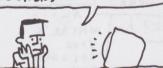
STICK IN THE

PLACE ...

I DUNNO ... I MEAN,
I'M NOT TRY LHG
TO BE SOME
AUTHORITY DN
IT ... I DON'T
KNOW WHAT



BUT I GET THE FEELING
THIS WHOLE SITTIFG IN
FRONT OF THE SCREEN
MOTIF IS PROBABLY
DEPRESSINGLY FAMILIAR
TO A LOT OF YOU "PVNK
ROCKERS" OUT THERE...



AS THIS GUY DAN SINKER AND I'VE MET HIM FACE TO FACE TWICE! OUR RE-LATION IS 98%. CANCER-CAUSING COMPUTATIONAL!



STEVE ALBINI, IN THE
LAST PUNK PLANET COMPLAINS THAT THE UNDERGROUND HAS BECOME "A
CARTOON OF THE MAINSTREAM" WITH ITS BOOKING
ACENTS, MANAGERS



WELL, THAT'S GREAT
AND ALL, STEVE...

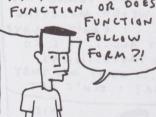
BUT LET ME
ASK THIS: DOES

FORM FOLLOW

FUNCTION

FOLLOW

FOLLOW



I MEAN, WHEN
YOUR SO-CALLED
"PUNK CULTURE"
IS A PROBUCT
BY AND LARGE
OF AN ELITIST
AND ALIENATING
TECHNOLOGY...



LOOK AT ALL
THESE RECORDS
AND MACAZINES!
THEY LOOK LIKE
FOMEONE'S PORTFOLIO FOR A JOB
AT AN AD AUENC!



TEN

WHEN IT HAPPENS
WITH BUILDINGS
PEOPLE CALL IT
LIKE IT IS—
CENTRIFICATION!



MINUTES LATER ..

AND JUST LIKE ANY
FORM OF GENTRIFICATION,
YOU HAVE THE PEOPLE
WITH THE "ARTISTIC
SENSIBILITY" PAVING THE
WAY FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE "FINANCIAL
SENSIBILITY!"



YEAH, YEAH -- COMPUTERS

ARE EFFICIENT, THEY

FACILITATE COMMUNICATION AND THE EXCHANGE

OF INFORMATION, THEY

ALLOW PEOPLE TO

PRODUCE MORE, QUICKER... SO WHAT! SO

DOES FREE MARKET

CAPITALISM!! THAT

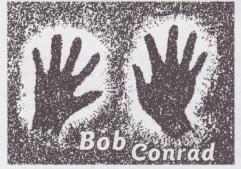
DOESN'T MAKE IT

PUNK ROCK!

HEY, DAVE, UH,
I'VE GOT A PVNK
PLANET COLUMN
DUE TODAY AND,
WELL, I DREW
THIS COMIC ...

COULD YOU
SCAN IT IN
AND E MAIL
IT FOR ME?

B. THE IRONY!



The dichotomous quality of the question, "Is the cup half empty, or half full?" is, by its nature, superficial. It wasn't until Bruce

Lee said, in an entirely different context, "The water becomes the cup," that the original question can be granted more honest and interesting consideration.

Which is why I find the assertions "art is life and/or life is art" equally limiting in the absence of another perspective. Both views resonate with culturally reified assumptions of this enigma known as art and what role it plays in our lives. Art as we know it, as with most of what constitutes our structures of knowing, is largely a response to our culture; a document, in other words. It is therefore no wonder that the art we typically and unconsciously consume is ripe with the messages of cultural fragmentation. Billboards, performances, news, television, our clothes, cars and even our staged protests each contribute to the general temper that who we are is, simply, not good enough.

As a species, we tend to devalue ourselves in the cleverest of ways. There is, to me, no irony that both religionists and cultural critics are similar in this regard. How they express our fallibility may differ—a critical difference, both camps righteously assert—each claiming their own stance as necessary for human betterment.

But this is all old news. Endless debate and envelope pushing occupies these old visions. Despite their fashionable characteristics, this pursued—or rather, followed—worldview is actually quite antiquated. True revolutionaries don't dress in revolutionary rhetoric or clothes, but instead propagate a spark that results in wildfire for millennia to come. In that sense, Jesus will probably outlive Karl Marx.

Extending this thought to its extremes requires abandoning the perceived wisdom of humanity's doings. The wisdom of what is does not require human acknowledgement. Long before humanity came to be, the universe was evolving just fine with an intelligence of its own. Humans are merely part of a much greater whole. With this in mind, an almost detached viewpoint is required in order to look differently at our larger role in life.

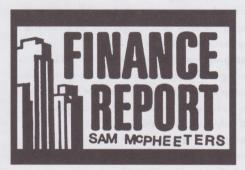
If it is art that we look to for information about ourselves, perhaps it is a greater art to move beyond the traditional view of life as being within the context of humanity to instead look at humanity within the context of life. From this perspective, suddenly the many things that we latch our attention onto (e.g., social, political and economic injustices) become less significant. A consideration for a broader worldview begs for an examination of just where it is we devote our passions. The corrupt politician, the altar-boy-fucking priest, the rabid anarchist and the bombthrowing pro-choice activist become less symbolic. In fact, these kinds of diversions, becoming more commonplace as they are,

inherently become less important. They are more accepted as a sign of the times.

And the times aren't looking healthy. While I believe that we have a systemic choice to relearn what it means to live within the basic laws of life, it is entirely plausible that we may end up the way of the dinosaurs, albeit from our own doing. Art as I tend to view it seems to reaffirm the latter, most often by its tacit consent.

Should we choose, however, to be generous with defining what art is, then there must be room for saying "art is life and/or life is art" without anthropocentric assumptions. The artist, then, writes with the hand of life. But this artist may only happen to be a human being.

www.secondguess.net



#### FOOD ON Y'ALL

This reporter is deeply conflicted to relate that a 20-page fanzine of Henry Rollins

poetry has just been sold for \$205 in an online auction. I bought the thing for a dollar in 1990, which would make my rate of return slightly over 20,000%. If I reinvest the cash wisely and pull the same trick again, I can make \$40,000. Do it once more and I get a cool \$8,000,000. This is what all the big guys huff and puff over—rate of return. The next time Bill Gates & Donald Trump get together to eat in one of their fancy restaurants, their conversation will no doubt center around my stupendous feat.

The deep conflict arises from the U Word. "Usury", once confined to the lending of money at high interest rates, has come to mean a more general, amoral brand of profiteering. The Bible weighs in quite heavily against usury. Try Ezekiel 18:13: If he has exacted usury or taken increase - Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him. Yikes! If my little online auction isn't a clear-cut case of "taking increase" than I don't know what is. Despite not wanting my, um, blood upon myself, however, I'm not so disturbed by my own apparent greed. I am disturbed at how thoroughly my passion over the issue has evaporated. This kind of stuff used to vex me into a mad froth not 10-years ago. There was a time in my life when over-inflated record prices were a real and palpable evil, the shallow end of a continuum that included all culture related markups, crookedness, financial cynicism, hypocrisy, graft, racism, war, genocide, etc. It's hard, writing from the comfort of the 21st century, to decipher my thought processes. But I do remember that I wasn't alone. Venus records in New York sus-

tained a low-level drubbing from others and myself for years over this issue, the outrage of the righteous over the perception of unfair prices. Friends assaulted their door with condiments. Stock was vandalized. Lip was given. Serious stuff.

The problem with the commandment against usury is that it challenges its detractors to formulate a fair price. It's a slippery proposition. The owner of Venus once smartly posed this very challenge to me and I sidestepped with some teenagerishly amateur snide comment. But he saw right to the meaty core of a problem that exists yet today—the ever-shifting boundaries of fair price. Like, I guess \$205 plus shipping and handling is kind of harsh for a slim tome of pretentious poetry. When I close my eyes, concentrate, and ask myself what seems like a reasonable amount, a hazy "\$4?" emerges (this was my asking price for the zine in question). But that's still a four hundred percent profit. I would certainly hate to see, for example, the \$125 used refrigerator my girlfriend and I bought in 1999 purchased on ebay for \$500.

And there's an unspoken paradox here, so obvious that I have to wonder if I was freebasing coke or something during my uppity antiusury-guy days. If poseurs are the problem (and even at this late date I still remain convinced that poseurs, in various stripes and guises, are THE problem) and if only a poseur would pay \$46 for a Peter And The Test Tube Babies record... well, isn't this an elegant solution to both problems? There seems something beautifully Darwinian about the whole arrangement. Who am I to mess with Darwin?

Yet... there are even flaws in this approach. The implication of my own superiority over the buyer, at the very least that I "got over" on someone, makes me kinda uncomfortable. I'm not sure that there was any getting over involved in this latest transaction. Perhaps the Rollins zine was purchased for a noble cause. I'll never know. Statistically, it's not impossible that the buyer paid the whopping winning bid only to rush the item on a doily to a dying grandparent, some bittersweet last request. Actually, I guess that is a stretch. But it could have been purchased as a birthday present. Who am I to mess with someone's birthday? Most plausible still, the buyer could be a prudent investor. A twenty thousand percent return over II-years is the Holy Grail to even the wealthiest of investors. The Sultan Of Brunei would bark like a duck for those numbers. The same logic that makes me a smart guy for pulling off the sale potentially makes the buyer exponentially smarter than me. Damn.

At least I didn't bootleg the thing! And don't think I didn't think about it! I did! A few staple pops, some tender moves at the copy shop and I've got a steady extra income. I strongly doubt any buyers of my hypothetical cloned zines would be running a fiber analysis on the paper or grades of Xerox toner. Victimless crime! And if Ezekiel already dooms me to an eternity in hell with fishhook through my eyelids for the initial sale, why not bootleg it? Well.... because I already sent it off, that's why. Oops.

#### MISCELLANY

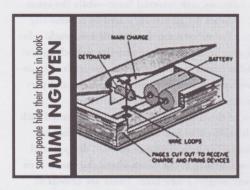
I. For all the complaints I've read about the new Hotmail design, I have yet to hear anyone else gripe about the fresh

wave of audacious Spam that started the moment their site was updated. I get at least two commercial messages a day now with headers like, RE: We charged it to your Visa or RE: Your account is overdrawn or RE: I want to suck your dick. Is this the next wave of something? The funny thing about online marketing-people worry about privacy loss, pernicious techno-sophistication and invisible cookies, when what they SHOULD be worried about is the opposite; the reversion to crude intrusion, the dangerous desperation of modern advertising. It's the big secret of every business magazine. The number one commodity for all modern markets is consumer attention. Advertising is a victim of its own success. The same technology that allows a seller to blast a million potential customers with unwanted ads forces that same seller to compete against a million other sellers, all in competition for dwindling fractions of the public's time. (I actually read an entire book on this subject over the course of a long train ride last year, Seth Godin's Permission Marketing [moved by the same spirit that got me through a Louie L'Amour novel... I didn't want to pass through life without having read at least one text from the cowboy and marketing genres]. I remember it had a strong effect on me. Now I can't recall a single word of the thing.)

The future of advertising may not be the giant video geishas from Blade Runner. My bet is that we're going to see far more of the tactics perfected by the street freaks during my five years in Richmond, VA. I remember driving around and a guy running into the street, frantic, arms flailing, screaming "Stop the car! Stop the car!" When I played the Good Samaritan he ran up to the window to see if I had any cigarettes. And who could forget the door-to-door serial borrowers? I recall several confident chaps ringing the bell and asking to adopt my bike for half an hour. One guy lost his composure after I refused, paused for an angry minute to reflect, and then pointed next door, blurting, "Well, your neighbors... how they livin'?!" Some ad exec is going to catch on to these tactics sooner or later. I can easily visualize this future-Pepsi sponsored home invasions, Virgin Megastore theme-muggings, rocks stenciled with the Verizon logo hurled through windows...

- 2. I should note that I'm not reinvesting a dime of my easily gotten \$205. It all goes for some alimonyish payments due to a large East Canadian printing firm. These good souls printed many a CD and LP cover for me, which I guess is this column's link to this issue's graphics design theme.
- 3. The Rate Of Return conundrum creeps into the creative spheres. Take these columns, for which we are all eventually paid our \$40. If I need eight agonizing hours to churn one out then I'm not making but five dollars an hour, fry cook territory. But if I dash this thing out in a half hour, I've suddenly lurched into the \$80 an hour range. Not bad. A 15-minute column gets me into the lawyerly tax bracket of \$160 an hour. And a two minute sprint—90 seconds smashing on the

"j" and "k" keys as fast as possible followed by 30 seconds of random space bar insertions—gets me into the \$1200 an hour range. Could such a gibberish fest make it past the editors? Only time will tell ...



This bloody road
remains a mystery /
This sudden darkness
fills the air /What are
we waiting for? /
Won't anybody help
us? / What are we
waiting for? / We can't

afford to be innocent / Stand up and face the enemy / It's a do or die situation /We will be invincible!

Whether princess or pauper, Molly Ringwald in all her incarnations meant nothing to me. The sum of her girlish charms left me unmoved. Neither pouting lips nor thrift-store femininity could persuade me. I remained unimpressed with her seemingly eternal pursuit of heterosexual romance—a pursuit, which was translated on film as "spunk" or "personality." As an ominous sign she favored feathered blonde boys in white linen suits and my god, they were in high school. Bad taste by way of Simon LeBon was continental maybe, but unfailingly bland. Or she slummed it for an afternoon with the broken boy from a broken home, whatever—she got her kicks by crossing the tracks just far enough to fake the danger.

When feeling especially vicious, I imagined her twenty years later, her pale mauves and hot pinks turned to suburban corals, a sickly salmon hue.

From Pretty in Pink to Some Kind of Wonderful to Say Anything, The John Hughes oeuvre was unfailingly conservative—either you learned your place in the social-class continuum, the value of upward mobility, or both—Reagan-era cultural politics for teenagers. And the dangerous girls, the ones with potential-the baby dykes and raccoon-eyed freaks-were inevitably tamed by the promise of romantic heterosexual love, that old sleight of (empty) hand. Like anyone really believed Watts with her red-fringed gloves and drumsticks in back jean pocket would fall for a chump boy like sensitive-yet-superficial Keith. We all knew in our heart of hearts that she was destined for girls like us, girls who wanted to rock (and make) out with other girls. I envisioned her in Greyhound buses and truck cabs, blonde head pressed against the rain-spattered window, trekking to the Pacific Northwest after a last-gasp graduation to join an all-girl rock band. And I cheered when The Basketcase in her black shadow and black mood uttered, "When you grow up, your heart dies." That felt real and prophetic, even. But when Ally resurfaced from high school bathroom in white lace and distastefully muted eyeliner, I recognized

the set-up and cursed Molly (and Hughes) for her awkward, awful transformation and looked away.

But Billie Jean—now she was a girl who could bruise your heart.

This shattered dream you cannot justify /We're gonna scream until we're satisfied /What are we running for? / We've got the right to be angry / What are we running for? / When there's nowhere we can run to anymore /We can't afford to be innocent / Stand up and face the enemy / It's a do or die situation /We will be invincible!

I love *The Legend of Billie Jean*. I first saw it when I was fourteen, three years after it was released. I was an alternateen looking for punk rock and I found Billie Jean. Not instead, but simultaneously. It had everything a girl like me could ask for in a "whirlwind story about a group of kids who challenge the adult world:" a girl outlaw in fingerless gloves and a righteous sense of justice. Isn't this every girl's teenage fantasy?

In 'The Legend', it's summer in Texas, and the heat is sweltering. Billie Jean is an attractive working-class white teenager who lives in a trailer park with her divorced mother and bleached blonde younger brother Binx. Because she is "from the trailers," the local boys believe she must be cheap, and led by ringleader Hubie, the boys trash Binx's scooter (and later Binx) when Billie Jean proves otherwise.

Billie Jean arrives at Hubie's father's seaside shop to demand the exact amount for the scooter repairs after appealing to a sympathetic but dismissive police lieutenant. The senior Pyatt invites her upstairs to the office, ostensibly to withdraw money from the safe. Once there, he suggests a "play as you pay" plan—and he makes himself plain, sliding his hand against her arm and suddenly lunging. No wilting Texas rose, she knees him in the groin and flies down the stairs into the shop, where Binx has discovered the gun in the register. Seeing his sister threatened, he waves the gun at Pyatt, and the gun accidentally goes off. Thus begins their headlong flight from the law, taking their best friends Ophelia and Putter with them in a battered station wagon.

After a failed attempt to negotiate with the police at a mall—Pyatt brings a gang of teenage thugs for an ambush—the kids break into a mansion for food and shelter, and discover an ally in the son of the District Attorney. He suggests they make a video to present their demands and Billie Jean, earlier mesmerized by Jean Seberg's portrayal of Joan of Arc (the film is playing during a group discussion), prepares herself for inadvertent pop stardom. She shears her locks and shreds her clothes, making herself over into a modern Joan of Arc or a more righteous (rather than merely art-damaged) Penelope Houston. Her friends are in awe, and soon so is everyone else within reach of radios, newspapers and television sets.

The video of Billie Jean with her fist in the air, shouting, "Fair is fair," is played everywhere. Inspired by her message she becomes a touchstone for teenage rebellion, a fugitive aided and abetted by legions of youth. They slip her past police roadblocks,

offer her shelter in underground clubs, and nourish her on their fathers' credit cards. Young white girls get the "Billie Jean cut" and even Putter (no stranger to the "real" Billie Jean) invests in Billie Jean's celebrity and defiantly cuts her hair before a rapt audience of wannabe Billie Jeans, cops, and her abusive mother.

Beneath the layered guitar wanking and arbitrary (but temporary) love interest lies not only a critique of misogyny and classism, but also a meditation on commodity culture, pop presence, and fantasies of identification. In the course of her criminalization Billie Jean becomes an icon, even a fetish. Ever the businessman, Pyatt not only displays the bloody shirt he'd been wearing when shot, but shills photographs of Billie Jean taken by Hubie's pals, emerging enraged from a local swimming hole in a clinging top and bikini. He pawns pastel-hued t-shirts emblazoned with her "mug shot," the red concentric circles of a target framing her head. There are visors (oh so '80s) and posters and bumper stickers and frisbees and beach towels, some of them ironically emblazoned with the slogan "Fair is fair."

Her gender and class status as "white trash," those markers that contain and constrain her mobility through the world, are coded as dangerous and criminal—which makes her a target twice over. Her status as a "white trash" teenage girl makes her hypervisible to the disciplinary state, even while her ascent to cult figure in some ways depends upon ignoring the historicity of those social conditions; so that even as she is pursued by the mustered strength of Texas law enforcement, her image reaps profit and (pop) pleasure for others.

The Marxist model of commodity fetishism describes an affective process, a substitution of meanings-the social relations of labor are disguised by the commodity form. But commodities and images do not simply veil "real" conditions, but constitute them. Images are also social relations, and this becomes clear for Billie Jean as the line between state surveillance and her supposed celebrity is blurred. This is a different order of fetishism-a fetishism of figures, in which the iconic persona of "Billie Jean" is invested with a life of her own. It is the transformation of fantasies into figures. People relate not to Billie Jean per se but her image, and in a way that obscures the histories of its determination as image. Like all pop icons, she becomes the screen upon which an audience of thousands projects their fears and fantasies. The adults are afraid of her and the kids adore her. They make meaning of their own lives, whether seemingly threatened or otherwise encouraged, in relation to her image.

A group of preteens rally to her, hoping that she'll save a neighborhood boy from the physical abuse of his father; a man spies her adolescent "gang" and vows to bring her to justice, and like a Old West vigilante (complete with cowboy hat and rifle) he guns his pick-up truck at the gathered children. And as a pop figure the social relations that conditioned Billie Jean's outlaw status are obscured. The girl who offers Billie Jean a ride in her Ferrari might not have done so if she were not a celebrity, and the throngs of teenagers who sport her image may very well have been

her torturers only days earlier. The girls who turn themselves in to the police, all claiming to be Billie Jean, participate in a projective fantasy of being "bad" like Billie Jean in ways that elide uneven class relations and hierarchy and also manifest a desire for "authenticity." It is a fantasy with material force—while the sense of solidarity forged between the girls is mediated by commodity culture (and punk rock is no exception), it is still a meaningful relation, enough to inspire the contradictory impulse to both appropriate and inhabit Billie Jean's notoriety. Their gesture is not simply part disrespect and part homage, part consumption and part conviction, but a mixture of all these things at once.

The conclusion of the film finds Billie Jean confronted with her iconic stature, literally. Her brother has just been shot by state troopers—mistaken for herself in a dress—and disappeared into the back of an ambulance at the beach where she was to turn over the "hostage" and receive a new bike. There are crowds of young and old (but mostly young) attracted to the beach by the media-frenzy over Billie Jean's scheduled appearance. In the hours before the exchange—boy for bike—was to be made, beachgoers are treated to Billie Jean haircuts, Billie Jean contests, and Billie Jean souvenirs. Radio station DJs broadcast from sandy towels and portable amps and the teenaged audience parties in anticipation.

Billie Jean only notices once her brother is taken away that everyone has her face stuck to some part of their bodies, and follows the trail of lights in the dimming dusk to the circus tent Pyatt has erected to sell his wares. Towering above the beach is a papermache effigy of Billie Jean, pointing a gun toward the ground, other hand on hip. Before the crowd, the cops and the cameras she confronts him about his sexual coercion, his unwillingness to otherwise pay for the damages to the bike-and seeing that she has an audience, he grins, stutters, and attempts to bribe her into silence, or submission. He reaches into the register and pushes a wad of bills into her limp hand. "A little more, a little less, does it matter?" he says. "It's not about the money," she replies scornfully, and throws the bills into the fire. As Pyatt scrambles on all fours to recover the cash Lloyd moves behind her to toss a poster into the growing flames. Soon the crowd is coming forward to lay their souvenirs in the fire, or lofting them through the air. Everyone watches as the fire grows to consume the posters, tshirts, tent and effigy, perhaps participating in another, totally different kind of collective pleasure.

In film after film Molly (and others like her) triumphs when she wins the rich boy in her homemade prom dress or bride's maid gown, proof she is worthy of heterosexual desire. Not Billie Jean. In the end she walks away from the fire, the boy, and Texas. (This is when the Pat Benetar song "Invincible" plays, and this is why I tear up like a big gooey baby every time I hear it.) Her burning effigy is not only an allusion to Joan of Arc, having led the people to a dream of freedom, she's misunderstood and betrayed by the very same—but a potential critique of consumption as "revolutionary" activity. But at the same time, it speaks to

the dangers of consuming and appropriating radical stances and images, of the depoliticization of historical conditions or capitalist relations. It also points to the contradictory pleasures of fantasy identification with our pop stars and the possibility for that pleasure to become a kind of political agency, however temporary.

Is any of this coincidence? One of the screenwriters for the film was Walter Bernstein, a blacklisted writer in the 1950s who was targeted by the House on Un-American Activities Commission for his leftist political alliances. It's entirely possible that he was versed in the kinds of intellectual debates circulating among leftist cultural workers at the time, and retained some of these threads even in penning a mainstream film marketed for the vast American teenage market.

Is it cheesy? Well, you could argue all teen flicks by necessity are idealistic and melodramatic, and this is a fantasy about a teenaged heroine who struggles against a homegrown injustice. Overt metaphors (perhaps Joan of Arc is a bit much) and the cringe-worthy menstruation scene are distracting. And clearly Billie Jean the character depends upon Helen Slater the actor being recognized as conventionally "pretty:" tall, thin, and blond. My more "serious" friends roll their eyes when I say I love Buffy the Vampire Slayer or The Legend of Billie Jean. Suspicious of desire and pleasure in popular culture, they can't imagine how I might enjoy any of the fruits of a "sexist, homophobic, white supremacist society." But I think the demand for absolute resistance is misguided, and to demand purity in pop culture ignores contradictory and complex realities, and so maybe there's hope for Molly after all. We know by now that no mass cultural production (especially film) is shaped outside of corporate management and market influence; we know capitalist culture is able to assimilate even the most "revolutionary" sorts of images or themes without threat to its survival. But it may be that because we already know these things, we can begin to ask other questions. The issue of how to capture the popular imagination is at the center of the struggle for hegemony. Instead of dismissing popular culture (and its audience) for the fact of its messy manufacture, we might probe further to examine the character and range of any given commodity form's power and possibility, what moment of crisis it might represent, what (problematic) pleasures it might afford. We should neither blindly denounce nor embrace these pleasures, but instead try to understand what produces them. This does not mean we abandon the analysis of late capitalist culture or patriarchal relations; on the contrary, it might mean that we take these more seriously. And as black queer theorist Wahneema Lubiano writes, "It might well be that taking popular culture seriously could teach us something about form, about aesthetics and about the development of pleasure in politics."

And maybe I just want to be able to take seriously my own pleasures; as a bi-queer Asian American girl reader of pop culture, I remember what it meant for me to harbor crushes on Duckie and Watts (and thus imagine her alternate endings), or to

read Wonder Woman as "almost Asian" (I was seven, and it was the black hair that did it). But it's also because when I first saw this movie at fourteen, it was like how punk rock used to feel—impossibly, hopefully idealistic. However uneven my own fantasy of identification, it fueled both my nascent desire for rebellion and my sense of its potential. And watching it however many years later, it reminds me how good it felt to believe.

I'll always love you, Billie Jean.

And with the power of conviction /There is no sacrifice /It's a do or die situation /We will be invincible /Won't anybody help us? / What are we running for? /When there's nowhere we can to anymore /We can't afford to be innocent /Stand up and face the enemy / It's a do or die situation /We will be invincible!

This column is dedicated to the lovely Wendy Beecham, who also tears up every time she hears Pat Benetar's "Invincible," the theme song to The Legend of Billie Jean. She is the only other person I know who fully appreciates the joys of this film, and reminded me not to leave out the good parts. Wendy also happens to do the amazing zine Subject to Change, chock full of personal-political insight and analysis, which you should get from her (POB 400686 / N. Camb, MA 02140) or Pander Zine Distro (http://www.panderzinedistro.com). Other great rock 'n' roll girl films include Times Square (1980) and Bandits (1997). I've been listening to The Pleasure Seekers' 45 recently re-released on Norton and its all-girl rock 'n' roll rules. What a way to die, indeed.

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As the cantor began singing "Shema Israel," he turned and faced the Israeli flag hanging from a pole beside the stage. I adjusted

my skullcap on the back of my bald head and stood up rather shakily. Staring at the blue and white Star of David-adorned pennant in front of me, I listened to the mourners in the pews behind us begin to follow the cantor's words, and wondered how I would feel if this had been an American flag I'd been facing instead of an Israeli one.

Recalling an anti-Semitic sermon I once heard on a Christian talk show about how Jews will never be true Americans because their religion demands conflicting national loyalties, I chuckled beneath my breath in sarcastic agreement, and began to sing along with the congregation. As much as I felt myself

overcome by the funereal sadness of the Shema, I was grateful for the ironic relief that this unconscious coupling of my brother's fate with the national identity of my family had cast upon the proceedings.

While I have sung the Shema at numerous proceedings over the course of my life, I find it hard not to separate it from the event at which I was first taught the lyrics to this song as a child: on Holocaust Memorial Day, in Israel. No matter where I am, every time I hear it being recited, it's deep, droning funereal swells cannot help but invoke the memories of the millions of European Jews who perished during the Second World War, many of whom were members of my own family. There are very few songs, religious or otherwise, that reconcile the personal and the political for me like this song does.

It's not only a song to end all songs, so to speak. To allude to a statement Theodor Adorno made in the mid-1960s, "one cannot write poetry after Auschwitz." The same has always held true for me when it comes to this piece of liturgical solemnity. Because I was raised to associate it with commemorating a catastrophe that resists any kind of objectification, even in the form of mournful commemoration, it has always demanded the most painful of silences where no sound can immediately follow.

Today, however, was going to prove an exception to that dramatic rule. As the congregation broke into the song's coda "Adonai Eluenu, Adonai Echad," interrupting this invocation of God, in the back of my head I could hear the voice of my brother speaking into my answering machine the week before.

"Nu shmendrick," he stuttered in Yiddish as the Shema ended. "Is everything okay? I'm just about to drive the kids up to summer camp in North Carolina, and I wanted to make sure that you had my cell phone number in case you needed me."

Shit, I thought. That was the last time I'm ever going to hear him.

All of the sudden, the ceremony was over. My brother's voice tapered off into the sounds of static from his mobile phone, which, as usual, he had difficulty hanging up. The cantor had stopped singing, and was announcing that my sister-in law would be hosting a reception on behalf of our family at her home immediately afterwards. Following Nina and her three children with my remaining siblings, we quietly walked out the door and onto the steps of the synagogue where mourners had gathered to pay their respects to my family and express their regrets about Michael's untimely passing.

My third trip to a synagogue since the late 1970s, the last time I had set foot in one was two months earlier in order to attend a female rabbi-led Hebrew naming ceremony for a friend's newly born son at a feel good temple full of happy thirtysomethings in San Francisco. Now, here I was in a synagogue again for the second time this summer, ritually observing the death of my second oldest brother in Miami, a city that had once been described to me as "the anti-Jerusalem, the place that old New York Jews go to die."

I laughed for a second time, trying to make light of this event by imagining myself telling my father that the only grief this place was really causing him was the price of the plane ticket from San Francisco that he had to help me cover. No such luck. Now was not the time to humor dad. Even though the only thing I really wanted to do was get carried home on a stretcher, there were mourners I still had to attend to, like the extremely old woman in front of me who had been standing there forever trying to get my attention.

"Are you going to bring your brother's body back home to Israel?" she burst out in a shrill New York meets Warsaw sounding accent.

"No," I replied rather softly. "Michael requested that we cremate him and spread his ashes over his favorite fishing ground at sea."

"Baruch ha-shem," ("Bless his name,") the old lady said to me in Hebrew, flashing a forearm with a fading tattoo of numbers on it. "I wish you and your family well."

Michael Aryeh, I thought as she stiffly walked away, you may have had the misfortune to die in Miami, but your ashes will find the home of their own choosing.

As my surviving siblings and I piled into our rental and attempted to drive to the reception that followed, we got lost in the seemingly endless maze of dead end streets and multiple repeats of similarly numbered suburban streets that circle the gated community that Michael and his family called home.

How on earth could anyone know where their home is in a town like this? I kept on thinking as my brother David repeatedly called friends and family members trying to figure out how to get to my sisterin law's home. No wonder they need to feel like they belong somewhere else. Miami is about more than dying. It's about not knowing how the hell to find your fucking family either.

"We just past three separate 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenues," I could hear David telling Michael's secretary on his cell phone. "Which is the right one to take a left on?" She didn't know. "I never drive to Mike's from that direction, "I could hear her saying.

Hanging up his mobile in exasperation, David decided to stop at a gas station and inquire as to where Michael's house might be. Even though my brother's home turned out to be less than half a mile away, the attendants had no idea how to direct us.

"Maybe we weren't meant to get there," my sister Naomi intoned as we sped off directionless past a new housing development.

Laughing, David cynically replied, "What do you mean? This place looks so much like a jazzed up Tel Aviv, it's hard to imagine we were ever lost."



The highway that winds through the back of my mind / Leads me down through the time when I was hoping to find / A reason for living or just to carry on / Or fragments of

meaning I could turn into song / But I don't want to go back to Ontario / Even though it's the last place I know / Where a man could be free to be what he wants to be / Or maybe disappear, I don't know . . .

Years ago I wrote a song and a story called "Ontario." Both used the idea of Ontario to represent the wide open spaces, a place where the past fell away and one could start a whole new life, or, if that was too ambitious, simply disappear into a soft velvet oblivion.

Why Ontario? As near as I can figure, it came from my childhood habit of studying maps. Ontario was vast and nearly empty stretching from the US border almost to the Polar Regions.

Perhaps more important, it was portrayed on the map in a gentle violet color, in sharp contrast with the strident yellow that represented Michigan and the brazen red that marked Ohio. Everything would be better there, I imagined, everything from the land to the sky to the light in its people's eyes suffused in soft purple.

This might seem like a strange fantasy, even for a strange child like myself, but it was stranger still when you considered that I grew up almost within sight of the real Ontario. Twenty or thirty minutes on my bike and I could be on the banks of the Detroit River, still lined then with the belching chimneys of steel and chemical plants.

The smell might be too much to bear the pollution so thick it obscured vision and brought tears to my eyes. But even on the foulest days, I could see Ontario across the river, looking close enough to touch.

It wasn't the nicest part of Ontario by a long stretch. Now that I've seen most of the province, I'd have to say it was one of the bleakest. But even if its main attraction was that it wasn't Detroit, there was something about the tree-lined streets, the lack of smoke stacks, the fussy tidiness, that set it apart from a Detroit still in full service to the banging, clanging industrial Moloch.

All these years later with Detroit stripped of its manufacturing base, with hundreds of thousands of people forced to choose between poverty and moving away, some might look nostalgically on those days. The air may have been as fetid and rancid as the breath of Beelzebub, and more dead fish floated dead on top of the water than swam within its chemical confines, but there was well-paid work for nearly everyone.

I knew I had to get away, though, and even when I grew older and my childhood illusions faded into accretions of disused memory, Ontario still beckoned. The oddest aspect of all to my fixation with an imaginary Ontario was that I knew the province in real life—the part that stretched from Windsor to Toronto, anyway. I'd been there dozens of times.

I was well aware that there was no soft purple light imbuing the land that Ontario, like Michigan, was full of factories and pollution and landscapes bludgeoned into near-insensibility by the heavy hand of man. My mother had been born in Ontario, and most of my relatives still lived there. Apart from their accents, which lent an air of quaint gentility to even the plainspoken farmers who had never been more than 10 miles from their hardscrabble corn and tobacco fields, there was little to distinguish my Ontario relatives from my Michigan ones.

My grandfather, a simple, earthy man with a second grade education, was one of them, or had been. His dream of making a living from the land had failed abjectly, and he was forced to become a "nickel immigrant," the name given to Canadians who paid the five cent toll to cross the Ambassador Bridge in search of work in Detroit's auto industry.

When I was a small boy and Grandpa was still of sound enough mind to answer the questions I should have asked, I had no way of knowing the things that must have been going through his head. Thirty-five years in the howling bleakness of a Chrysler assembly plant, a depression, world war and three children grown and off with families of their own, and he was finally free to retire to another hardscrabble farm.

This one, like the one of his young man dreams, was mostly clay, frozen by the long Michigan winters and then baked into a cracked, hard pan by the unforgiving summer sun. Too old and too creaky in his joints to tend this land more suited to brambles and thistles than the potatoes and peanuts he loved, Grandpa mostly sat on the porch, gazing across the highway at the dazzling blue expanse of Lake Huron.

Why Lake Huron was that intense shade of blue, so blue, in fact, that it put even the sky to shame, I never understood. But I wasn't the only one who'd noticed; everything around there was called Bluewater this and Bluewater that. I did know, because Grandpa told me, that on the other side of that vast expanse of water was the magic land called Ontario. But the lake was wide—so wide that to a small boy it might as well have been the ocean—and now Ontario was too far away to see.

As I grew older, the mythical Ontario receded and a more real and gritty one took its place. The summer I was 13-years-old I read Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, with its descriptions of trains chugging mournfully across the Russian steppes. Lolling about in Aunt Bertha's barn, I could hear those same distant whistles and an almost inaudible clickety-clack as mile-long trains snaked their way through the Southern Ontario flatlands en route, I imagined, to Opasatika and Kapuskasing, Kitigan and Smooth Rock Falls. For that summer, Ontario became my own private Russia.

Through my teens it was mostly weddings and funerals that brought me back to Ontario. At one such gathering, I met my legendary Uncle Will. As near as I could tell—the story was usually told in vague allusions through pursed, disapproving lips—Uncle Will had as a young man thrown away a promising career and lit out for the North Woods, where he'd lived the rest of his life in a converted chicken coop.

I couldn't understand how a member of my dreary family could have come up with such a brilliant idea. I plied him with questions, though I didn't have the nerve to ask the one weighing most heavily on my mind, namely whether he had evicted the chickens from his coop or if they had continued to live side-by-side with him.

He was not forthcoming on the particulars of his own life, but just when I was beginning to think that, chicken coop or not, he was as boring as the rest of my relatives, he told me about an 18th century ancestor, "I guess he must have been just about your age", who for his sins had been exiled to a seminary situated even deeper in the North Woods than Uncle Will's chicken coop.

Apparently the young lad hadn't taken to the religious life, because within six months of arriving, he had set fire to the seminary and run off to live with the Indians. To this day, I've never been able to get another member of my family to confirm or deny this story, but then they don't talk much about Uncle Will anymore either, now that he's passed on to That Great Chicken Coop in the sky.

The summer I was 19, I went to Toronto on my own for the first time. Times had changed, and Toronto was no longer a drab simulacrum of an English provincial town that closed on Sundays and whose public houses had separate entrances for Gentlemen and Ladies. Darrell and I wandered into Yorkville, Toronto's version of the Haight-Ashbury, awash in incense, colored lights and tinkly bells.

In our Detroit shirts and jeans, we felt like hicks from the sticks compared with the velvet-clad hipsters who went swirling by in the night. We tried to start conversations but were rebuffed with blissed-out smiles that stopped just short of smirks and sneers. What we really wanted was to find out was where the dope was. We could smell it everywhere, but nobody offered to share. This stuff we'd been hearing about free love and everyone being groovy was turning out to be bunk.

We wandered down a back alley, and in disgust I kicked at a cigarette pack lying on the pavement. It felt oddly heavy, and I went back and picked it up. It was full of marijuana. Fate or the gods had left it there for us, I was sure.

Darrell and I had lied to each other about being old hands with marijuana; in reality neither of us had ever been high. We were as anxious to smoke it as we were paranoid about getting caught, and what followed was a 24-hour-long comedy of errors as we tried to sample our newfound booty.

Afraid to buy rolling papers because everyone in the shop would know what we were up to, we instead got a corncob pipe (there being a distinct shortage of hillbillies in Toronto, I can't imagine what people made of that). Then we set out to find a safe place to smoke. No matter how far we wandered from Yorkville, through back streets, nearly into the suburbs, it seemed there was nowhere we could be alone.

We'd huddle in an alleyway, and just as we'd strike a match, a car would come round the corner. We thought the railroad tracks might be safe, until we had a narrow brush with an express train. We sat in a deserted park where we had a clear view of every horizon, and along came a man walking his dog. Almost certainly a police dog, we reckoned, and ran like hell.

A whole night of this, and we still hadn't gotten our lungs around enough smoke to have an impact. Worse, each time we'd been spooked, we'd dumped what was in the pipe, so we'd already gone through half our supply to no avail. The next morning, we took a bus to the industrial city of Hamilton, 45 miles away, and climbed halfway up the mountain that overlooked the city.

After clawing out a place in the underbrush where we could pretend to be invisible, we finally joined the psychedelic revolution. We choked on the acrid smoke, our minds turned inside out, and, clinging to the side of the mountain for fear of falling off, watched the smoggy haze above the city transmogrify into a surreal iridescent hue.

Our paranoia floated away replaced by an air of supreme invulnerability. Back in Toronto we smoked dope openly on the street, even offered it to strangers. We rode the new subway as though it was an amusement park ride, sending telepathic messages back and forth about the sad sartorial state of our fellow passengers.

I can't remember which ran out first, the dope or the money, but our idyll ended one Sunday morning at 6 a.m. when we were rousted from a sound sleep under a couple of pinball machines in the bus station. Broke, hungry and disoriented, we still had a breeze of a time hitchhiking back to Detroit. The bubble only burst when we hit US customs. They kept us there for four hours while they ran warrant checks, shone flashlights up our butts, and repeatedly asked if we were boys or girls, how long we'd been on drugs, and what kind of sexual things we did to each other.

They turned us loose into the 3 a.m. streets of downtown Detroit, a not especially good place, even 30-odd years ago, for two skinny, funnily-dressed white boys to be wandering. We walked most of the night and for the first hour or so, I could see the deceptively shimmering waters of the Detroit River and, beyond it, the lights of Ontario.

There were no more family visits to Ontario after that. My hair had grown too long, my clothes too odd, and I was banned from seeing the relatives. I made one more trip to Toronto, an even more surreal expedition on a number of grounds.

By then, I wasn't just smoking dope; I was eating LSD on an almost daily basis. What's more, I was in love. My first boyfriend and I had the brilliant idea of hitchhiking to Toronto in the dead

of winter to see the Canadian premiere of the musical "Hair." We were glam-rockers then, not much given to practical clothes, at least not practical in terms of five-foot snowdrifts and subzero temperatures.

Gold lamé trousers and green velvet platforms might make a striking combination in the disco or on the catwalk, but they're not well suited to the side of the road outside an all-night diner in Buffalo. How we avoided freezing to death or being killed by fag-bashers, I'll never know. The drugs and/or the love must have been powerful. Try as I may, I don't remember being cold or hearing a cross word the entire trip.

Except, again, returning to the United States. This time they didn't just shine the flashlights up our butts; they shoved them right on in. Dennie, timid, tongue-tied, looking like an ultra-pale, transsexual version of Zsa Zsa Gabor, came in for a special share of abuse. Compared to him, I looked almost normal.

And then the years fell away, like so many leaves in an autumn gale. I left Michigan for the West Coast, and if I visited Canada at all, it would be British Columbia. The few times I passed through Ontario, it was just that: passing through. Everything looked smaller and dirtier and plainer than it had in the old days.

Until the past year or two, that is. For some reason Ontario started looming large again. And this time I couldn't say whether it was the mythical, magical Ontario of my childhood, or the genuinely amazing place that the real Ontario is. Maybe the two were finally becoming one.

I've been all over the province now, to most places where paved roads go, and a few places where they don't. I find myself wishing that Grandpa's farm hadn't failed that I'd been able to grow up on that side of the border. I find myself wondering whether Ontario is where I ultimately belong, where I'm destined to end up.

Maybe my feelings about Ontario are a microcosm for my feelings about Canada as a whole. It's a lucky country, maybe the luckiest country. Even its phenomenally bad weather can be seen as a blessing; if it weren't for the ice and snow and subzero temperatures that descend upon Canada for half the year, almost everyone in the world might want to live there.

Yes, it has its dark sides. There's that silly argument, some three centuries old, between people who speak French and people who speak English, an argument that seems doubly silly now that most educated Canadians can speak both. And there's the ongoing tragedy of Canada's first peoples, stripped of their culture and huddled together in their squalid wilderness ghettoes or on the decaying back streets of sprawling prairie towns.

Even considering all the time I've spent in Canada in general and Ontario in particular, my view of it must appear romanticized and superficial to those who actually live there. Canada is not just America without guns and with free medical care, and Ontario is far more than pristine forests and the bright lights of

Toronto. For all I know, some kid growing up on the other side of the water from me might have imagined Michigan to be the wondrous land of opportunity and mystery.

The point is that we all need someplace to escape to, or more likely, to imagine ourselves escaping to. In olden times, maps were drawn with whole sections of the world left blank, marked off as "Terra Incognita" or simply "Unknown." No such places exist on earth today, and science is rapidly cataloguing the previously unknowable reaches of outer and inner space.

Until the late 19th century, North America still had its "territories," places beyond the reach of civilization. They provided a safety valve for the malcontents and misfits who couldn't quite accept the constraints of structured, modern life. It was probably not coincidence that just as the last frontiers were vanishing, bohemia emerged, a place located not in time and space, but in the minds and affections of its denizens.

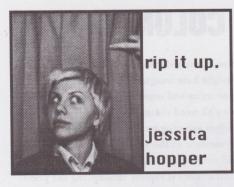
It could be found not just in the obvious places like Greenwich Village or Paris's Left Bank, but anywhere that artists and visionaries and existential rebels gathered. And wherever they went, it traveled with them. It's a place, I realize now, where I've spent most of my adult life, and I can safely say that it's much an illusion as my childhood vision of Ontario. And just as vital.

The cynical, among whom I can often be numbered, argue that bohemia is no more than a finishing school for middle class brats, a place where they can be warehoused until they're ready to be integrated into the workings of mainstream society. There's some truth to that. There's even more truth to the notion that by allowing a fractious minority to dress up in funny clothes and mouth anti-authoritarian slogans within a contained environment, society inoculates itself against the possibility of real insurrection.

There's a deeper importance, though. Just as a man kept from sleeping and dreaming will go mad within days, someone lacking a means of delving beneath and beyond the surface of things will cease to be human. Some choose religion or political ideology for this purpose, but the structured nature of those approaches too often only mirrors the world we need to escape.

As one whose own personal nirvana somehow became conflated with a large Canadian province, I'm hesitant to turn my nose up at anyone's version of praying, chanting, meditating or hyperventilating if it produces the desired effect. The important thing is to have somewhere to go, somewhere where the world can't follow.

As I grow older, life seems to involve a great deal of cartography: filling in and fleshing out the blank spaces on the road map of my soul. But Ontario—my Ontario, that is—is one place that defies mapping. Shifting shapes and changing colors, always beckoning but ever eluding my grasp. I can tell you stories about it, sing songs about it, even, in my crude fashion, paint pictures of it, but I'll never get it right. I wish I could take you there, but I can't. It's the one place where I can only go alone.



I have pinpointed the first night where I felt grown up and free, rather than just grown up and saddled with all the encroaching

unfun of adulthood and bills and expectation. I was 20, living in LA. I was invisible and anonymous, a daring little speck in a boundless city of quiet filth. All my hopes were firmly landed in the future, confident that strains of good-life unfurl heavy and lush was in front of me; I just had to let it find me. Los Angeles and its well-sunned denizens shanked me with a near-constant low-grade misery. Except in the-middle-of-the-night-nights, if I was alone (my preference)—hot-wiring my creativity with caffeine, a half pack of camels and a few rounds with some dusty, vaguely resentful, haunted LP giving wings to my bewildered disgust. I would open my front windows and lean way out, one hand clutching the windowsill for balance, the other holding my cigarette, looking up to the hills that surrounded-with the satellites and planes and radio towers blinking thin halos above at the houses, these houses-seemingly made of windows. I could watch their parties, fights, affairs and the usual, as it exists for the well to do in deco-revivalist castles with avante light fixtures and polished patio furniture. I would watch and wonder if living in a house that beautiful, with it's attendant accoutrements-like a bed frame, a telescope or a juicer, if all that makes you feel any better. Perched in the window, watching it all shine in the dark, awed... that was about as close as Los Angeles and I got to being on good terms.

As is standard in Los Angeles, the majority of my "friends" I knew only by their first names, what part of town they lived in and what sector of the entertainment industry they were in and who was the most famous person they were associated with. I had befriended my ex's oldest best friend's soon-to-be ex. We were both rambunctious, 20, dressed like new wave sluts and had perfect teenage asses. This was more than I had in common with anyone else I had met since moving to LA two years prior. I liked her well enough and bothered to learn her last name. Djinni, who's name you said Jenny, had hippie parents and was raised in a trailer, or perhaps tent or adobe hut in Sacramento. She couldn't drive and didn't work, and lived in an efficiency apartment towards the top of a magnificent former hotel in East LA. I'd take the bus over and spend the night (I didn't drive either). We would try on all her clothes, prancing & singing to the B-52's yellow record, drink some beer or Cuban coffee, smoke some cigarettes, and fling little bits of trash from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor window down at people trying to score drugs in the park. It was the best fun we could come up with, and it suited me fine.

Djinni had a best old-friend from back in her

trailer/tent/youth, named Johnny. All I knew about Johnny is that he had a long, beautiful Italian last name and a car, and perhaps was a bit of a drifter. Or a loner. Or maybe just unemployed. Once I had asked her what he looked like and she said, "He's only got one tooth and it's got hair on it"—I laughed rill hard. I thought that was the best line I'd ever heard and told her so, so she said it again, two or three more times all the while howling like a teenage hyena. She said that he was coming to town and we all would have some adventures with him. Since neither Djinni nor I had any money or cars, adventure meant pretty much everything aside from temp jobs and taking the bus. And as this was back when I still drank, the prospect of coming unhinged was still an enticing one. Plus, when you are 19 or 20, the only real reason to get out of bed in the morning is to see just how far you can push your luck.

Djinni calls up late, around I a.m., telling me that she and Johnny Beautiful Italian Last Name are on their way over to get me. We've got little more agenda than to cruise in Johnny's car because it's just that. And also, it's a humid summer night, and we are charmed ladies with bare shoulders who laugh very loud and very often and any man should be lucky to parade with us on the wide streets of the city. (I should also mention that our evening cruise did have a purpose: the next day was trash day and Djinni and I both needed shelves.) Djinni and Johnny roll up in this glorious yellow mile of little-bit dirty convertibleleather seats the color of cream butter; wide and as long as a semi, it's maybe a '69 or a '71. Cartoonishly huge and very American. I want to get up on the top of the backseat like I'm the mayor's wife in a parade and wave to the people sleeping in their houses and cats hiding under cars. Instead, I opt for the front seat, sittin' bitch between Djinni and Johnny. Johnny is wearing a wife-beater-rebel cliché perfection for a night with this sort of humidity, with a last name something fancy, and especially given that he was driving a car that's 17 feet long, regal as fuck and the color of a banana.

We drove everywhere that was east of Hollywood (Hollywood proper is the last kind of slow, sloppy death you want to lay eyes upon). Trolling through the hills of Silver Lake, up behind my house, the car puttering like a diesel fishing boat, Djinni snapping homemade knock knock jokes on us, then cackling like a witch-puppet on a children's TV show. I felt giddy and high. I wanted to beg Johnny to hit the highway, make like juvenile delinquents—on the run, looking frayed, wearing night-before clothes during the day, hair dirty and askew from staying up 'til dawn, watching our nothing-future from the prime view of the backseat.

We drove slow and every few minutes one of us yelled "slow down—what's in that trash?" and Djinni or I would lean and hang out over the door-top to get a better peep, or hop out "Duke's of Hazard" style to better investigate some curbside furniture pile up. We drove further into East LA, where all the streetlights had

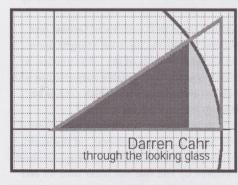
been shot out. We drove through downtown, past the cinematic beauty of the train station, through the white-tiled tunnels, through little Tokyo's neon and arched roofs. Passing lady boy hookers, lowered Civics with ground effects and a wild coyote on the way. We laughed about everything and nothing, at Djinnis I44<sup>th</sup> knock knock joke, at each other. I snuck glances in at Johnny, trying to figure out if he was truly handsome, or just sorta cute. Everyone looks good when illuminated by the generous glow of streetlights.

Hours of cackling had given way to collective silence as we drove over the long white stone bridge into Edgewater. We were heading towards the crisp, elderly enclave of Glendale—almost cold because it was 3 or 4 a.m. All was quiet except for the extra old oldies AM station and the low, steady rumble of the engine. I stared at all of us in the reflection of the various car mirrors, feeling like my life was a cunning little secret.

Addenduumb: I am looking for help with the following I) learning how to play piano 2) how to find out about getting grants 3) finding a copy of Oaktown 357's Juicy Gotcha Crazy 12" or their lp. If you can help me with any of this, please let me know.

p.s. Thank you to all the many many awesome ladies and sirs who wrote in response to my sexism column. Your generous words, anger and right-ons were truly beautiful and inspiring. PPS. Can't get enough of these hot licks: Tigerbeat 6 label comp, Soul Jazz' New Orleans Funk Comp, Badfinger, Black Sheep, Shiner live, Replacements—Pleased to meet me.

Tell me about you now: P.O. box 14624 Chicago IL 60614 — mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com



Today our topic is the best topic in the world.

Porn.

There is no topic more likely to get your col-

umn read than porn. I can write about music, I can write about politics, I can write pure comedy, I can write about drugs, I can even write about vegans. They all pale in comparison to the interest porn is able to stimulate amongst the reading public. In general, people will like my column, or not, and they may read it, or not. But if I write about porn, man, everyone will stand up and salute.

So to speak, of course.

Anyway, I've been thinking about porn a lot recently, as it

has been topic A in nearly every debate about new media and the Internet. I've been trying to decide if porn is a good thing, a bad thing or a dumb thing. I've decided that it is all of the above, which is not really too surprising when you consider that porn is pretty much the most pervasive thing on the planet today.

All of us have seen porn on the web—it's difficult not to, really. Hell, everyone gets unsolicited e-mail with links inviting them to the HOTTEST, WETTEST corner of the Internet.

Whatever.

I, like everyone, have looked at the links, and in general the contents are either (a) boring, or (b) hysterically-over-the-top-ridiculous. Lately, though, I've noticed that an increasing number of these invitations have actually grown odd and, in some cases, disturbing. I'll get to that in a minute.

But first, a point about the subject matter itself. I look at porn on the Internet, believe it or not, as part of my job. I do some work for a toy company, which is regularly victimized by scam artists on the web trying to attract customers to their sites. Many of these scam artists are, of course, porn guys. I have to track these folks down and get them to stop. Pretty simple.

Most of the sites that you see are brutally efficient, no non-sense and about as erotic as a piece of hamburger. And that's what I find so interesting about the phenomenon. The sites are so profoundly non-erotic that they're almost like weird, totemic objects. They're staged events of purported "passion" with nothing emotive or passionate about them.

Unlike, say, an erotic story that depends fully on the reader's imagination, most porn is entirely visual. You see it, you're supposed to be aroused. Instead, though, porn makes sex seem like an invitation to experience repetitive stress disorder. Anything and everything that would make the pictures erotic is removed, and in their place is...is...is...

Nothing.

Oh, sure, fetishes are inserted into the picture. People are provided with a wide variety of tools in order to reap what they sow, but any of the things that actually make sex interesting and/or worthwhile are removed from the pictures. There is no context. No context at all.

The question I have is simple: Why?

Why is porn so popular when it acts purely as an abstraction of something meaningful? It must be, I realized, that what turns people on to porn has nothing to do with the pictures. It has to do with the idea.

The idea is what does it. People are turned on by the concept of what people are doing in the picture and not the actual picture itself. They are aroused by the implications of the picture, by the insertion (so to speak) of their own consciousness into the situation being dramatized by silicon enhanced automatons in a motel outside of Los Angeles. Context makes things more complicated—people don't want motivations, they want anatomy.

This is weird enough, but it gets even stranger. Now, more

of the fetishes you see advertised in these come-on e-mails sound like they're advertising sex which, to put it mildly, doesn't necessarily come with consent. Violence is implied. Some of the e-mail come-ons sound like they're advertising imitation child porn ("barely legal" models dressed up in children's clothes). Sometimes, you can stumble into some weird site in another country where real child porn is actually being advertised.

There are two aspects to this development that I find disturbing. One, I find it disturbing that people are attracted to the idea of sex as domination. Sure, I'm not so naive as to expect that this isn't one of the oldest fetishes around, and as long as its between consenting adults, hey, go crazy. But people attracted to the abstract concept of sex as rape, or sex with powerless beings (whether they're children or, in some cases, animals) is a grotesque parody of sexuality, and it makes you question the underlying cause.

I believe that a lot of it comes from a very non-sexual (and perhaps even economic) source—people feeling powerless in their lives. People with no sense of introspection feel as though others are controlling them, in their working lives and in their personal lives. They become attracted to the notion of dominating others, even hurting others, as a way of feeling powerful again, of reasserting something that they have lost.

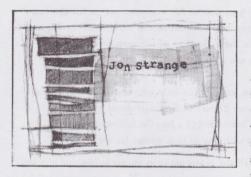
Sex is no longer about desire, or arousal, or even sex—it's about power. Those who are being controlled become fetish objects, dehumanized. They cease being people, and become objets of hatred representing the repressive power the dominator feels upon his own back.

The other aspect to this whole thing, which I find disturbing, is the real life effect that these obsessions are having, here and abroad. I'm a free speech absolutist, with one exceptionwhere people are not actually consenting to the speech or acts, which are being portrayed. If some adults want to screw around in 243 lbs. of chocolate pudding, and film it, hey, that's their Godgiven right. However, a poverty-stricken II-year-old girl in the Philippines is not, I guarantee you, consenting to have sex on film. And no matter what anyone tells you, the power relationships (and the colonial, imperialist rape (figurative and literal)) of the children in these third world countries so that some folks in Germany, Japan and the United States can get their rocks off is, simply, vile. The fact that an industry largely based in the United States (a child porn ring was just broken up which brought in as much as \$1.4 million each month) can damage so many people in order to satisfy a desire to return to individual and/or imperial power is sickening.

So, to recap: (I) Porn is good—people can express themselves freely in public, and people can be aroused by those expressions to their hearts content without hurting anyone. (2) Porn is dumb—people are generally getting aroused by abstract meat fairs instead of expressions of erotic desire, which is creating a generation of people blase about their own sexuality. (3) Porn is bad—people are attracted to images of violence, rape and domination that have nothing to do with sexuality, and everything to do with power.

While it once was an illicit fascination (especially when we were 15), or intellectually interesting (especially when I could pontificate about it as a cultural production—in the post-structuralist sense, of course—in college), now most porn is merely depressing.

I guess my initial question when I began this column was an inquiry into why people don't have better imaginations. But then, I guess imagination is irrelevant when sex isn't even the point.



Carlo Giuliani is dead, shot in the face by a cop in Genoa, Italy. He was participating in the demonstrations against the G8 meeting

in his hometown of Genoa. One of thousands of people who were mad as hell at the way these economic "superpowers" are making the world over in the image they want to see—docile, expendable, and most of all, available to the whims of "free market" imperialism. This description applies as much to people as it does to plants, animals, land, air, water, ideas, art, culture, and tradition. In this view of the world, everything is a resource, available to be used and discarded, with a value dictated only by profit potential.

Carlo Giuliani was not alone in the streets of Genoa, nor was he the first to speak out against the injustice brought upon the rest of the world by the governments of the G8 countries, or by their masters, the faceless and unaccountable corporations who plunder the world in the name of their faith, which cannot be questioned nor challenged: free-market capitalism.

Nor was he the first to be killed by the few and the powerful, preserving their control over the many "resources" of the world. Those "resources" include you and me, and many people around the world who will be chewed up and spat out faster than we ever will. Does this young man who dared to ask for a more just world deserve more attention than the millions who die from deprivation, suffer indignity and injustice, or lie hungry or sick at night, wondering if they'll make it through tomorrow? No. His death outraged concerned people around the world for the sheer brutality, for the bold defiance of human rights by the Genovese police. It should have. But we don't need more martyrs. People die every day directly and indirectly at the hands of the G8 countries: young black men on the streets of any neglected neighbor-

hood in cities around the US, peasants and farmers throughout the global south, children who are chronically malnourished in all parts of the world due to strangling economic policies, people who die of diseases both curable and incurable because medical attention offers insufficient profits, and millions more.

We have a million times over the martyrs necessary to point out the cruelty of these villains. Yet there is still an insistence that so much suffering can be justified.

Whether by apologists for the "free market" who, if anything, want to deliver even more control into the hands of corporations, or liberal-lefties who think that we just need a few reforms for things to work out for everyone. This steadfast refusal to acknowledge this system as fundamentally destructive is invoking the anger, the creativity, and the militancy of millions of good people who have simply had enough.

I'm most distressed by the probably well-intentioned folks who would like to see things change, but are just too damn scared to stretch their imagination into seeing what that would look like. I'll admit: I have only the faintest idea of what I want the world to look like. But I know that the choices offered by people who have to be protected by miles of fencing and violent armed police officers will never consider the interests of the people of the world. So when the hand wringing begins about "property destruction," I have little patience. When scared liberals get all worked up about how "undemocratic" the protestors are because they won't simply lie down and let their rulers make terrible decisions in their name, I have little patience.

A popular chant on the protest circuit these past few years runs, "This is what democracy looks like!" While police blockade the streets, meetings are held in secret, and we're all milling around in teargas fog, or spray-painting circle A's on walls, hoping we won't be the next to get hauled off to jail or clubbed with a truncheon. Good grief. That's not the democracy I want to see. That's what anger and dissent look like when they run into the face of power and control. So yes, it's silly for protestors to assert that they are the example of democracy when indeed, it's protest. This pales in comparison; however, to the insulting absurdity that those protestors should forget their anger and participate in the process of "rational dialogue." Democracy allows for everyone's participation in making decisions, not walls surrounding summits, not raids on Independent Media Centers, not bullets flying through the air. And these are the extreme examples. It's also unacceptable to call it "democracy" when the dialogue and the options are severely limited and control by those in power. In democracy, everyone has power.

So the liberal folks who are more threatened and upset by "random street violence" and the many ways principled people express their anger and resistance leave me pretty confused. Are they missing the brutal repression that the world is suffering from?

Are shop windows more important than human life? More

important than the freedom to speak and assemble? Is protestors' violent outrage worse than the state, the corporation, or the economic treaty substituting violence for "rational dialogue?"

In case you think I'm exaggerating the case, here are some recent examples of the severe repression activists and protestors face. Police shot three people during protests in Goteborg, Sweden in June. Over 400 people were arrested last year during the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, and their trials continue still today.

A woman was found dead, strangled and drowned in a river in Padua, Italy following the Genoa protests. There are many more, sadly, and yet we often hear sentiments which suggest that these people are just getting what they deserve. That Carlo Giuliani was getting just what he asked for by being in the streets of Genoa that day. (For examples of more systemic repression, look at "developing nations'" debt to the "developed nations," and think about what that debt is exacting from the people in those "developing" countries.)

I don't expect the same kind of protest or resistance from everyone. I expect solidarity—an understanding that there are many ways to give voice to our dreams and hopes and fears and anger. I expect mutual support amongst all those who reject the disgusting inhuman way the world has been manipulated and controlled. I want respect for the spirit of resistance in its many beautiful forms.

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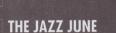
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ou know how some bands seem to defy all logic and keep putting out great record after great record, time after time, year after year? It gets to the point where sometimes you take the consistent quality for granted and it isn't until the band breaks up or all the members pull a Skynard and crash into a mountain that you realize the amazing output that had been produced.

Since 1983, the comic book *Love* & *Rockets* had been doing just that: putting out solid issue after solid issue. It wasn't until cocreators and brothers, Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, decided to call it quits on the book that the consistently high quality of Love & Rockets became appreciated. Sometimes it really is just like what Cinderella's Tom Keifer once sang: you just don't know what you've

got till it's gone.

After doing some solo work separately—Gilbert working on his two series *Girl Trouble* and *New Love* and Jaime continuing the lives of his *Love* & *Rockets* characters in the books *Penny Century* and *Whoa, Nellie!*—The Brothers Hernandez decided to re-launch *Love* & *Rockets* in 2000. Somehow the hiatus between volumes one and two of *Love* & *Rockets* allowed the rest of the world to catch up with the Hernandez brothers and re-discover the comic, as it's now the hot new comic book—even if it is a series that's nearly 20 years old.

Of the two brothers, it's Jaime's work that it is most closely identified with the comic, perhaps because of his accessible style. Blending together his Mexican-American heritage along with his coming-of-age in the world of punk, his multi-arced stories feature complex, fully realized characters that learn and grow just like real people.

Equally as noteworthy is that his two lead characters are females—and Mexican-American—a noticeable rarity in comics. His panels seamlessly tell his stories, never relying on the crutch of narration, making Love & Rockets one of the strongest demonstrations of the comic book as a vehicle for storytelling.

Of course, the most obvious appeal of Jaime's work are the drawings that fill those panels. Equal parts *Archie* comics and Alex Toth, Jaime's lines achieve an elegance of economy and a fluid crispness without ever becoming too rigid or stiff. The lines can smoothly bounce back and forth between a stylized cartooning and a facile naturalism.

Sure, it's fun to yammer a lot about his work and throw in all kinds of low and high faluttin' references, but it's just plain obvious that his drawings are purty and he has a knack for drawing some super-cute cuties; if the appeal of his work was so confounding that you needed a handbook and encyclopedia just so you could crack open the pages, then his comic wouldn't have lasted this long, anyway. He's Jaime Hernandez and he makes some damn fine stuff, OK?

Interview by Quanah Humphreys

Most of the characters in Love & Rockets come from a punk background so I assume that you come from one as well. When did you get involved with punk, '76?

Actually, more like '78.

I'm assuming because of the closeness of you and your brothers that you all kind of got into it all at once.

Pretty much, although Gilbert kind of led the way. He was always looking for something new and we were pretty jaded at the time. We'd heard of punk but we didn't want to get sucked into something that was going to fail us again.

How old were you at this point and what got you so jaded?

I was a teenager, but at a very young age we became very skeptical about any kind of art or entertainment that was coming out. The '70s were so boring, with things like glam and glitter, so you didn't have much to choose from. I'll admit, I was kind of in my lost years, not doing anything very exciting. So I'd heard of punk and I was like, "Oh so punk is going to show me

something, huh? Show me." I should have been into it by '77 'cause we already had the first Ramones album, but I was still skeptical of the whole thing. I mean, I liked the albums and everything, but I wasn't so sure about the whole movement. We were living in a small town, so we didn't have much support for something like that.

This is in Oxnard, California?

Yeah. Slowly, gradually, I got into punk, and then I just dove right in and never really looked back.

Started getting into the music and the ideas, going to the shows and all that?

Living in Oxnard and being an hour away from LA, I didn't have a car so I was only really going to big venue concerts, listening to records and wondering what life was like out there with punk. It was mostly English punk that we were listening to at the time and it wasn't until early '78 that Gilbert started going to clubs with his friend to clubs in LA. He'd come back from the shows and was like, "Guys you gotta go, this is great!" By '78, LA was pretty much polishing its scene and was still pretty young. Right after that I was pretty much, "Yeah, this is for me, this is my life."

You took what you saw in LA and tried to bring it back to Oxnard and get it going locally at that point, drawing flyers for bands and what not?

Yeah, we had our little scene in Oxnard by that time. It was as simple as, "How do you get a flyer?" Go to the guys who draw. It just seemed obvious to us to draw flyers cause that was the Raymond Pettibone style. When I saw his Black Flag flyers I was

like, "Oh boy, comics on flyers!" So it was kind of an obvious idea that when you get a flyer, get a drawing.

By the time you and your brothers started Love & Rockets in '83, you carried over the punk idea.

Yeah, and by extension we kind of faded from the music scene because it was either be in a band or draw comics. Just by being involved in the comics thing we kind of just slowly drifted out. We kept in touch with friends and stuff, but it wasn't exactly going to five shows a week anymore.

Were you in a band then?

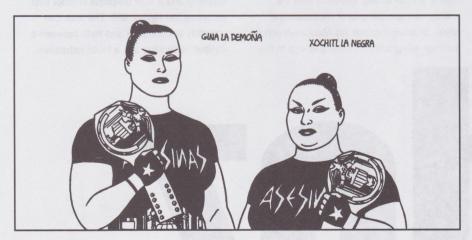
A garage band—no recording. As a matter of fact every one of my friends in Oxnard had their band recorded except Gilbert and I, somehow we were the only band that didn't make it to tape! The comic thing just died everything down; we just didn't have the energy to try to make our band go somewhere. We pretty much played a few local venues, parties, and things like that but the comic just took all of our time after a while. I was a much better comic artist than I was a musician anyway, so I think that was the smart way to go.

So you and your brothers then bought into the punk credo and that became the way you did your comics?

Yeah, I mean I got into punk at the right time. I was 18 and I was growing up and all these ideals were going through my head and it was a really good philosophy to go by because there were no rules and I kind of liked that. I can't really conform to the way things are supposed to be done—I'm either too lazy or something—so I really liked the fact that you do it yourself and don't give a shit. I mean, it really gave us the courage to make the comic, that attitude allowed us to be cocky and not really care whether we'd fail or not.

How did you coming from a SoCal Latin community fit into your entering the punk culture?

Actually, I had to have different sets of friends. I had my rock-n-roll friends, then I had my friends I grew up with, the ones I was hanging out and getting drunk with. I still have those friends but I know to keep them separate. Not like



they're going to kill each other when they meet, but there's just some things you don't mess with because you know better than to fuck up. I mean, I'm not going to try to tell a friend that I grew up with about the Sex Pistols because they're just not going to get it because this guy likes Earth, Wind, and Fire. I made a few mistakes in trying to push things, like, "Yeah, you should really come to the show this weekend!" and right away I found that wasn't the thing to do. Now I like it that way. I mean, like this weekend I'm going to hang-out with my old Oxnard buddies and just get drunk and shoot the shit, and that's fine. Nothing really intellectual about that and I kind of like that. If I want something else then, I'll go somewhere else then. I'm pretty lucky to be able to go between all these different lifestyles and survive them all.

Are comics a similar kind of segmented thing or is that something that kind of bridges across all that? What I mean is, are comics something that all your friends "got?" Were comics, specifically what you and Gilbert were doing with Love & Rockets, something you could share with both camps?

I'd say 90 percent didn't get what we were doing—even the punk ones! They kind of thought, "Oh, that's cool . . . uh, what do you do with it?" And you know, I didn't expect them to get it. I didn't expect my old friends to get punk, so I didn't expect any-body to understand comics because comics were sort of me and my brothers' own thing that we kept apart from everybody. It kind of sounds like we had this little weird world that we had going on but it was just normal to us. Comics were normal, punk was normal, hanging out and getting drunk was normal, but keeping them separate made it all seem like there was this weird little world

going on. But the comic, Love and Rockets, that's where it all comes together. That's where I get to have my cake and eat it, too. In the comics, I can just kind of throw it all in there and if you get it, you get it, and if you don't . . . well then that's just my tough luck, I guess.

So Love & Rockets is primarily you and Gilbert, but how was your older brother involved in the first one?

He basically got us off our asses to do it, that was his role. He goes, "Yeah, let's do this. I can get us some cheap printing," and then Gilbert and I just kind of looked at each other and shrugged. We were such big comic fans and we knew we had something to tell. We didn't know what exactly, we had all these different types of influences—but we knew we wanted to get in there somehow. I don't mean get in their business-wise either, I mean to tell our













stories. Growing up with comics and making comics ourselves, it seemed like the thing to do. I didn't know that we'd ever get professional. I mean, I had no idea that there was a market for what we wanted to do, but I was cocky enough to know there was something there. Before that, we were just doing stuff for little cheap fanzines and in those days 'zines weren't all the little mini-comics that you see today. Zines were mainly just science fiction things. I would draw someone in a space suit and things like that because I didn't know if they would understand what I was interested in.

Is that why the sci-fi flavor drops out of *Love* and *Rockets* pretty much after the first issue, because you guys just thought that was the only thing the market could understand?

I think it was more like we felt we had to put our whole lives into this one comic and I was like, "Well, I like to draw rocket ships, dinosaurs and punk chicks," and then just boiling it all together cause that's what we had. I myself had no game plan of what I wanted to do until the response started coming in. I knew that I liked drawing this and that and that I liked character interactions. After that, I got really involved in the other things, the real life stuff. You could get the other thingsmonsters and robots—anywhere in comics, but I had something more personal to say. After putting things down on paper and thinking about where I wanted to go with it, the characters just sort of took over. Punk life and Mexican-American life were just more interesting because comics had nothing like that.

Is that something that you recognized, so you thought there was a definite lack of your subject matter and storytelling, or was it not really that thought out? Was it just something you wanted to do?

At first, I just wanted to draw what I knew. Then after a while, I knew someone was out there that would be interested in our comic so it kind of became our duty, beside the fact that we liked drawing. I just thought "Hell, this kind of subject matter is not out there and this is legitimate stuff." I also wanted to take advantage of everything I could with what comics were not doing—not to mention books and TV—

as well. As far as the whole women's thing [in Love & Rockets] there just weren't any good women's characters out there.

So who did you think your audience would be?

People like ourselves, people that wanted to see something fresh. I'm not going to say *original* exactly, but people that were interested in different things and different cultures. We were trying to give it to them as truthful as possible.

This pretty much was after debuting on Fantagraphics?

After we had published our own version.

If Fantagraphics hadn't come along, do you think you would have continued self-publishing?

I think I would have spent another a year figuring out what I was going to do with my life. Maybe doing it half the time, maybe trying to do comics more. I wasn't raised with those, "You gotta go out and grab it, boy" type of dreams, so I don't really know what I would have done. This thing just kind of fell into our laps, so we just kind of said that we'd use what we had to work with, we'd use where we came from to speak to the world.

It's been 20 years since that point and you're still pretty much the comic book kings of the hill.

Well, they forget about you for a few years and think that you went away, but then you come back [with Volume 2] and they think it's a big deal. I mean, we didn't stop doing comics in between [Volumes I and 2] but that's what people thought. A lot of people didn't know where to find us. I mean, I talked to a lot of different comic book retailers and they said that people would come in for Love & Rockets and that when they'd say, "They don't do that title anymore, but would you like to buy Penny Century or Whoa, Nellie! and people would just kind of shrug and leave the store. I think Love & Rockets in its form had just become a habit and by the end of the first run, the sales had gone down considerably. Then [after the hiatus] they heard we were going to start doing Love & Rockets again and everyone was like, "Oh you're coming back to comics!" We were working our asses off as hard as we had always been

on Love & Rockets and I guess they thought it would always show up, just as easily as they would buy it or not buy it.

That's one of the things I guess you take for granted with comics, though, based on growing up on big press stuff like Marvel and DC when you're a kid, every time you go to a newsstand, the comic will be there like it just magically appears. On the other hand, it seems like the stuff you did in between Love & Rockets seems to have been sort of misunderstood even though it was based in the same "universe."

Gilbert and I were having some of the best fun that we've had with those issues. On *Penny Century* I had the most fun just letting my imagination go crazy during that time, but I guess it just wasn't *Love & Rockets* enough for some people.

I love the Whoa, Nellie! issues that came out right after Love & Rockets because it was such a sidestep from the Love & Rockets stuff.

A lot of the response for that was that it was just really self-indulgent, just girl fights. Partially, I did want to do something that really freed up my mind. I thought, "I'm just going to do some nice, slam-bang, beautiful drawing and not work so hard on the story." As it turns out, it turned into this whole nice, complex story that I'm really glad I did. It was kind of neat to find out that I can't make myself just throw something away and shell something out. The stuff is too personal. I get involved in it I just have to have a certain amount [of content] for me to be satisfied.

Your content has always, as you said, blended together punk culture and Mexican-American culture, obviously because that's where you come from. Your comic is still pretty much the largest portrayer of Chicano culture, a singular voice, really. Why the lack of comics with a Chicano aspect?

I was thinking that comics are just not a big Latin culture interest, maybe not fitting the lifestyle.

But you obviously grew up with comics, did your friends? Was it as large with them?

We had friends who read comics for a short time but didn't follow it as crazy as we did. A lot of them went through



I DRAW THE WAY I DRAW AND IT COMES FROM A MILLION DIFFERENT CARTOONISTS, BUT I'M NOT TRYING TO DRAW LIKE ANYONE ELSE, I'M JUST DRAWING LIKE ME. I CAN'T REMEMBER WHO I'M STEALING FROM AT THIS POINT SINCE IT'S BEEN SO LONG.



#### PUNK LIFE AND MEXICAN-AMERICAN LIFE WERE JUST MORE INTERESTING BECAUSE COMICS HAD NOTHING LIKE THAT.

puberty and found other interests. At one time they had their comics but got bored and found other interests, like baseball or something. As far as why we're some of the few guys doing it, I can't tell you.

I know the mainstream media, like even Time magazine, likes to keep mentioning Love & Rockets as a comic with Latino creators and really champion that angle, but is it something that the Chicano culture itself likes to acknowledge?

To tell you the truth, I couldn't tell you because I don't keep in touch with too many people as far as the comic goes; we're not part of this Latino art culture thing. I think about that, but I can't really worry about it or I won't get any work done, really. I do all the work, I bust my ass to do all the work, and try to get the best out of it I can. If this particular side of the world doesn't get it, I don't know how else to get it out there; I just know how to do it and do the work. We'd like everybody in the world to read our stuff, but we'll take what

we can get. I'm not saying that Latins don't read our comic, because there's many who do, I'm just not part of any real art cultures so we're on the outside of a lot of it, which kind of makes me happy. Watching what happened in the punk scene in LA, scenes are always doomed to have the jocks come in and ruin everything, anyway. Jocks, whatever form they come in, are the barbarians that come in and destroy everything. You know when the jock says, "Hey, I like Black Flag," that's when you know it's time to get out.

That seems to happen with every scene after a while, that someone finds it and blows it up in some retarded way.

Yeah, I kind of learned that from punk and found parallels in the way the whole world is run, especially the whole world of entertainment.

Do you worry about that with *Love & Rockets*, the aspect of it getting exposed and then morons coming in and ruining it for everyone?

I don't because I think that the type of mindset of our comic doesn't draw that kind of gang mentality. Love & Rockets still is kind of a small counterculture thing, or at least I hope it is. It's not going to put us in the top 40, let's put it that way. And while sure, I'd like to make a real comfortable living off of it, I like that it's really from the ground up and that I can still keep it honest.

That's kind of the nature of the medium of comics, that unlike a mass media like television or film which blankets you with its products, with comics you have a to make a conscious decision of what you want and then seek it out.

Which still allows me to be creative without compromising. The only real compromise that I have is to communicate with the comic and still get it out on a schedule that won't kill us.

With your comics you've said that a great deal of it comes from children's comics like *Archie*, which I can totally see in *Love and Rockets* with both your drawing style and the

relationships, but you've said that the greatest influence was Dennis the Menace.

You know, Archie and the Dennis the Menace stuff are my favorite comics. I draw the way I draw and it comes from a million different cartoonists, but I'm not trying to draw like anyone else, I'm just drawing like me. I can't remember who I'm stealing from at this point since it's been so long. The reason the Dennis the Menace and Archie comics still hold true to me, aside from having some good cartoonists on them in the early '60s, is because I just liked the sense of storytelling and the character interactions. There just weren't any comics like them. Pick one of those comics, like say Dennis the Menace: what's the comic about? It's about a little kid who causes trouble. People may put down the "dumb kiddie comics," but I have yet to see any other comic where there's the same sense of character and story. Take a page from Dennis the Menace and there's a whole page of Dennis' mom giving him a bath and telling him about the North Pole. You know, there's nothing like that out there and there wasn't at that time either, just a normal kid living his life. I mean, it would have failed if the artists were really terrible, but they just happened to have some really good cartoonists. It was just everyday life stuff that people don't think about when they're trying to create. You have Dennis' mom trying to take him to the dentist and he says, "I don't want to go the dentist, I've got strong teeth!" and he pulls the blanket off his bed with his teeth. Okay, dumb joke. That's no biggie, it's not Moby Dick. But with just the body language of his mom putting the blanket back and refixing the bed, I see my mom. I can see my mom in that. It's little things like that where nowadays you do that and people would call you a genius.

Did you see this at the time or was it just something at the time to easily identify with?

Mostly I was reading because it was a kid's comic and so I was reading it like any other kid. It stayed with me because of the artists' style and talent for bringing those qualities out; the posture of his mom, the motion of adjusting the sheets. Things like that really held dear to me because there's not a

comic out there that does that.

There seems to be this really big movement, inside the comics community at least, of suddenly recognizing all these children's and newspaper cartoonists that were pretty much ignored for much of their time and suddenly slapping the genius tag to their forehead.

I'm thinking that part of it has to do with that my generation, and the generation around me, are in charge now. As a kid my favorite movie was To Kill a Mockingbird. It was just never talked about until I got into my adult years and now all of a sudden it's a classic American story. I'm like, "Where were you guys when I was a kid and excited about it?" Well, they were kids like me. There's all kinds of things like that, things that I loved as a kid and I'd think, "Jeez, this thing is a classic, how come nobody talks about it?" That stuff was just considered junk, just middle of the road stuff. I think that has a lot to do with it, that my generation is in charge now.

Now that you're older and in charge, the characters in *Love & Rockets* are older now, too. Are people still going to follow it the same way or do they want the characters to be forever stuck in their 20s?

Every market seems to be for the youth money and so you can be doing the best work in your life, but if you're 40 years old, or if you're writing that Maggie is in her mid-30s, people are not going to want to read it. Actually, in regards to Love & Rockets, I've been proven wrong so far, but a lot of the comic and the popularity of my work was because I had two spunky teenagers as the leads and they got older as I got older, so a lot of people dropped out. I don't know how many times I've heard, "Oh, I used to read that when I was young." I'm like, [sheepishly] "Well, I'm still drawing it!" But you know, there seems to be still some kind of market that will support it. Originally the plan was for us to chart out 20 years of their life, but now that we've hit that point and are still doing it, that idea seems pretty silly. Were we thinking that we'd be dead by now? I'm 41 but I don't feel any different and I still have a lot to say. In fact I might even have more to say now that I'm older and wiser. @



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ew bands in the history of political rock can match the sustained fury of CRASS, the anarchist punk band that made the moral bankruptcy of Thatcherism brutally clear. Edgy, harsh, and frequently painful to listen to, CRASS's music was never in danger of being used on prom night. As reluctant as the band may have been to give listeners conventional musical pleasure, however, band member Gee Vaucher's cover and sleeve art testifies to its capacity for a rare kind of beauty. Unsparing in their political critique, Vaucher's pieces for CRASS demonstrate that skill need not be the enemy of passion. On the contrary, it is her dedication to craft that gives her work emotional and political staying power.

Two years back, AK Press published CRASS Art and Other Pre Post-Modernist Monsters, a collection of Vaucher's artwork... Although her work for CRASS is given pride of place in the volume, selections from her apprenticeship as an artist and her more recent work provide a richer, more human-scaled sense of her power and purpose as an artist.

On the heels of her book, Gee has been showing her work at exhibitions—and to high praise-recently. Now she has put out her first video collection Semi-Detached. I spoke with Gee as she and fellow CRASS-member Penny Rimbaud were hard at work transforming their Essex home into an inspiring—and weatherproof-focal point for a resurgence of grassroots radicalism in the UK and beyond.

Interview by Charlie Bertsch Artwork from Crass Art and Other Pre Post-Modernist Monsters (AK Press, 1999)

Many of your best-known pieces, like the one for Christ-The Album are collages made up your own paintings. Advances in desktop publishing in the last decade made it easy to produce collages from pre-existing images. The collage aesthetic became almost de rigeur in some design circles. And I think that may have blinded people to the labor that goes into work like yours, which is created from scratch.

I think the computer has been the death knell for a lot of potential artists. A lot of young art students think that they can do their work through the computer. But, the way I see it, until you've learned your craft, you can't destroy anything. For my own work, particularly the finely detailed pieces from the CRASS era, there's no way you can get that quality from a computer print-out. That's why I've decided not to sell that work, to keep it together. Because, visually, to see it in person is a different matter altogether. It's not possible for it to be the work of a computer. And that's what most people who know computers say. The quality in work like mine isn't simply a matter of fine details that computer print-outs fail to capture. It's that the work is done by hand. It has an aura about it. And the kind of work I did for CRASS is only black paint on white card. I never even used white paint! So it's the card coming through the painting that makes the work. When you take that approach, you can't afford to make a single mistake. I don't know. People just get a big buzz from seeing the originals.

It's funny how that works, because most people are still going to experience your work through your book, or the CRASS record sleeves, or even through the Internet. And when you see the work reproduced in these forms, it's harder to see what makes it so different from something generated on a computer.

I think lots of people have lost sight of what matters, for whatever reason, not to mention the struggle to survive on the most basic level. I think that, for some of them, seeing my work threw a switch.

It is. I've never shown any stuff in America. Of course, if somebody wants to invite me. I'd love to bring my work over! My work is in a strange arena now, because people feel that they can manipulate art on the computer and get the same quality reproductions that they would have gotten using older techniques. But in the real, computer work just doesn't have that quality I was talking about. Obviously, I've seen loads of photographic manipulations, what you see on adverts, and you think, "Wow. Look at that." Of course, it's not the first time we've been through this sort of thing. We used to do all our lettering by hand. Letraset only came in when I was in art school. And even that was frowned upon, the idea that you would do mechanical lettering by rubbing the letters onto a piece of paper! [laughs] Before that, you had to learn how to do it by hand, perfectly. And it's quite extraordinary to think how long that would take now. There are some things where you think "Thank God I don't have to do that by hand anymore." Still, I do a lot of CD covers now-mostly jazz-and I will very often use hand lettering because I love it. I can do it with my pen and ink, splosh it around, do all sorts of things. It works very well. It just gives you that hand-made look. There's just a quality there that you can't get any other way.

What you're saying makes me wonder how your art is received today. Do you think the people who liked your work at the recent exhibition had a different relation to it than they would have had 20 years ago? Back then, the aura of your work, its presence as something painstakingly handmade is not what they would have been talking about.

Actually, in terms of the reactions my work provokes at exhibition, I don't think things have changed quite that much yet. For the show in London, I built an extra room just for the CRASS stuff, but it was only a small selection. I was more interested to show the new material, so that's what I put in the main gallery. I just thought I'd stick a few old pieces—as a token gesture really—into this small room. Of course, a lot of the people who came were old punks and current punks.

And, quite honestly, it was a nostalgia trip. They got a really big buzz from actually seeing the originals, but it was all nostalgia. It was quite interesting to read all the comments in the book afterward. I was really excited that they really loved the new stuff. It's not so overtly political, but it is political. It's just not Thatcher in your face. I couldn't have said it any better than I said it in the past and the situation certainly hasn't changed as far as I'm concerned. I've had to move on, but there are obviously many aspects of society that fascinate me just as much.

Nostalgia within limits is fine, but you did get the sense that some of the emotional and political impact of the work was blunted in this new context.

I was at the gallery a lot. I spoke to a lot of people. And I have to say, listening to them and reading their comments in the book, that a lot of them took the form of "Thanks. You just kicked me in the arse again." It was really good. Someone would say, "Well, I've got a family now and I've had to buckle down and earn a living. But thanks for this show. I'm back in the fight again." I thought, "Great. That's fantastic." I think lots of people have lost sight of what matters, for whatever reason, not to mention the struggle to survive on the most basic level. I think that, for some of them, seeing my work threw a switch.

I'm curious to hear your assessment of present-day politics. How, for example, does the current hegemony of Tony Blair's New Labor complicate the sort of cultural activism that CRASS mobilized against Margaret Thatcher?

It doesn't complicate it. Blair is worse than Thatcher, because he's a liar. Thatcher never lied about her basic sympathies. She didn't care a fuck about the poor. The rich were the people who were going to inherit the earth. She was a right-wing shit straight down the line. Blair is a right-wing shit posing as a left-wing do-gooder. ¶ In this country, the underground is bubbling and that's great. It has taken someone like Blair and this fascistic Labor Party that we have right now to get people coming out. I feel very excited about this country at the moment. I can't stand the

place most of the time! I'm excited about the people who have been making contact with us now that we're coming out again. We can now lift our heads above the parapet, which we haven't been able to do for the last 10 years. We're connecting with older people who've got their families or who set out to do something and have now become very solid in what they're doing. They're coming in to share that with us. ¶ For example, there's a fantastic guy who used to come around with us on tour. He was a young punk back then, but now he's a sculptor-a basketweaver. But he's making bleeding houses! [laughs] He's making these fantastic structures that kids can play in. He does wonderful things from the most simple aspect of weaving.

So the old CRASS house, Dial House, is becoming something of a focal point for this resurgence of activism?

We're connecting with people from all over the world, people we haven't heard from in a long time who are doing great things and who have great information to share. We've already done one event here, which was very successful. It was a talk and debate called "Peace and Cultural Disarmament." It was given by Jesus Vicens and Angels Canadel from the University of Barcelona. It was really, really good. People got into it and debated and it ended up going on all day. And now they want to continue the debate, so we're going to be doing that in the first week of January. So that's really nice. There were 18-60 people from five countries participating in that event.

You were threatened with eviction from Dial House recently. What's happening on that front?

It's going very well, actually. We now own it. Or, rather, we own it thanks to a lot of friends who lent us a large amount of money. We're busy paying people back in any way we can. Lots of people are doing different events to help us raise money, which is really kind of them. But, in the meantime, we're trying to put it right for winter because the landlord before, the one we were in court with, forbade us to do anything to stop the water coming into the house through the roof. In the tenancy agreement we had, the responsibility













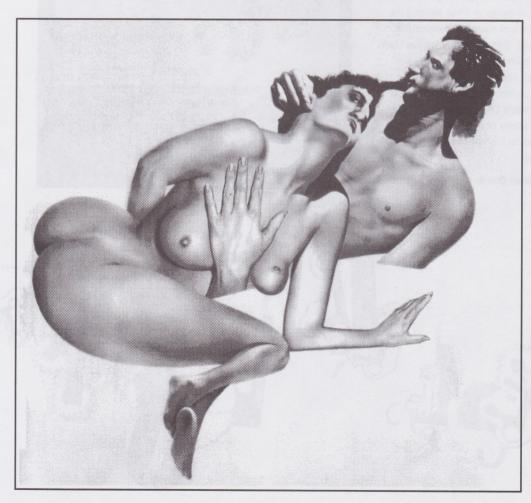
for doing anything to the outside of the house was the landlord's. We had responsibility for everything inside the house. He said he would take us to court for breach of our tenancy agreement if we tried to fix the roof, after we had been doing it for 33 years! [laughs] It got that petty-that vindictive and horrible. ¶ But now we're very busy. We just retiled the roof on the side of the building with old Welsh slates. It has taken a month to do it. We're literally about to lay the last slate. Somebody just popped in and left us a bottle of champagne, which is rather sweet of them. So we said, "Come back tomorrow and we'll open it and have a drink together to christen the roof."

I understand that you've decided to sell some CRASS art in order to raise money for the house.

Well, there's one piece for sale at the moment. I was going to put it all up, but I've been encouraged not to. It's being shown at lots of places now, so it's better that it's kept together. The piece that I am selling will be part of an auction that's taking place in October. Some girlfriends of mine came up with the idea of doing an online auction. So they've been very busy collecting art from people like Winston Smith and other artists and photographers. The work is going to be shown for 10 days at a gallery in London where I just had a show myself for six weeks. And on the last day there will be this on-line auction. Everything will be up there. You'll be able to see every piece that's being shown and read about the artists that have contributed. @

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It's not so overtly political, but it *is* political... I've had to move on, but there are obviously many aspects of society that fascinate me just as much.



met Elliott Earls in '93 when he was finishing up his last year in grad school.

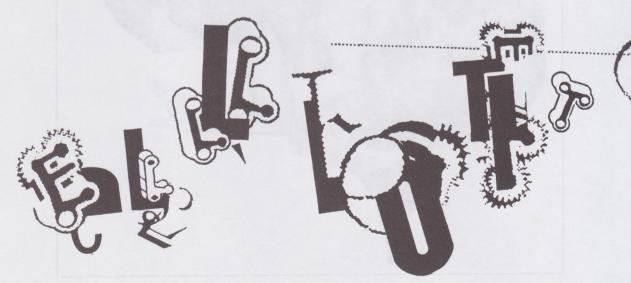
Since then, I have witnessed his work and incredible creative output evolve over the last eight years. Then, as now, Elliott's work exudes a power and individualism that communicates his creative determination. Elliott's singular vision slips and slides between traditional definitions of art, design, typography, music, and performance.

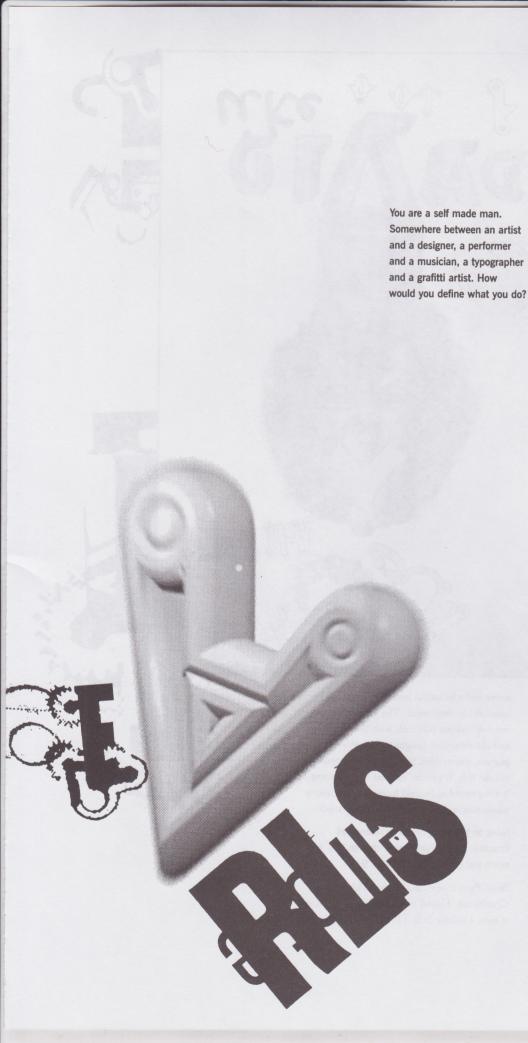
From his type foundry The Apollo Program to his self published CD-Roms Throwing Apples at the Sun and Eye Slingshot Lions to his live shows, Elliott has redefined what it is to be creative and where the boundaries of what is "professional" and what is "personal" begin and end.

As a traditional graphic designer by training, Elliott has been through the professional world of graphic design and has suffered the slings and arrows of corporate compromise and getting fired. Simultaneously, he has taken his creative destiny into his own hands and has become an internationally recognized designer and performer. Now, as the head of the Graphic Design Department at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Elliott has come full circle, back to his roots and the start of a new beginning.

Interview by Matt Owens







Shit . . . "Self made man," that's all there is! That's the name of the game! How would I define what I do? The point behind my career so far has been specifically not to define what I do. Society-"the system"-has this desperate need to categorize everything. My responsibility is to the love and the bliss. ¶ When I was eight or nine, I was mad into electronics all that Radio Shack crap, but I was terrible. I had this gigantic soldering iron that must've been made in hell. That shit was too hot, I baked everything I attempted to make. Nothing worked, it was really frustrating. A couple of years ago, when working on my performance, I decided to get back in to electronics. Everybody I knew would drive off to the office and sell industrial rubber floor products and here I was again sitting at my desk working on some circuit I cooked up. Of course, I had to put food on the table just like everybody else. After working 18 hour days on homebrew electronics projects, you don't walk out to the mailbox and pick up your check from Atlantic records. Their is no linear relationship between this kind of work and cash. It makes a man work his ass off. ¶ I hear that categorization crap all the time: "Elliott ain't no pop musician"-a few years ago Atlantic Records passed on me, because I was thought to be "too much" of an artist. "Elliott ain't no graphic designer." "Elliott ain't no artist." It brings to mind that terrible expression you hear in bad Steven Segal movies: "Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out." I could care less about my societal fit. I've managed to get paid rather well to do my thing. I'm happy to let others try to define me.

> How long have you been doing design and developing typefaces? Do you still consider yourself a designer or do you consider yourself something else?

Relatively speaking, I'm classically trained. In high school I apprenticed with a painter in Covington Kentucky named Ron Decker. From their it was a Basel School-based foundation education. Then a brief period in the Big Apple as a junior designer for Rudolf deHarak. Then finally it was off to Cranbrook. After that, I spent six months at

Elektra records before I got fired and started my own studio. ¶ My method has always been design. My primary frame of reference, as a maker of work, has always been design. I design pop songs, I design electronics etc...

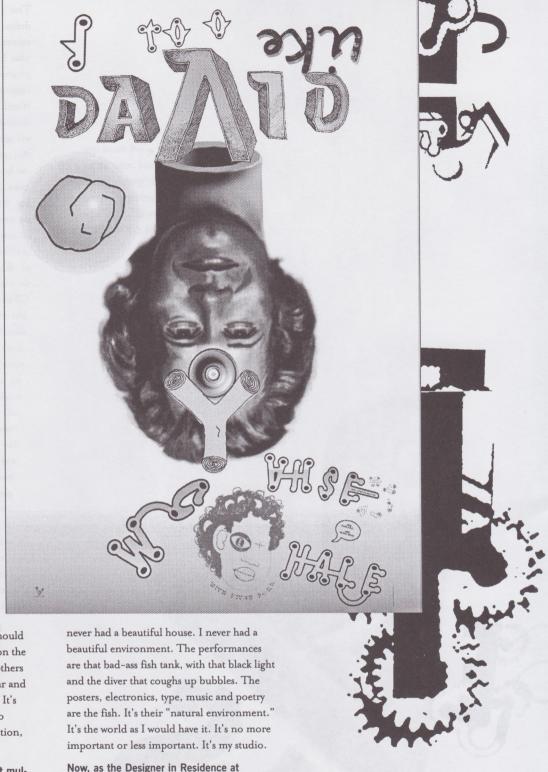
Doing things yourself—self publishing your own fonts and CD-Roms—is very much a part of what the Apollo Program is all about. Why is independently publishing your own work important to you?

It is absolutely imperative that I simply not let the system dictate what is possible in my life. It's about taking responsibility for one's success or failure in life. Excuses abound: "I can't write music because . . . I can't write a screenplay because . . . I can't be a performer because . . . " I'm absolutely convinced that the human mind is capable at every turn of justifying one's lack of success through blame. No one is holding a gun to my head prohibiting me from writing a beautiful novel, or a killer hip hop track, or a moving screenplay. I realized a long time ago that David Geffen picks up the phone and drops a dime on me only after I've done the work-not before. Dig? The naked truth is that it's damn hard to write beautiful music, and the desperate need for that next piece of equipment is the excuse machine kicking in to justify inactivity and failure. I tryand I stress I try-to get on with it everyday, to be that fucking "thing." Some days I'm better than others. I remind myself that you can't hide behind a

pencil or a guitar. What I mean is you should pick up a pencil and make some marks on the paper, if they're fly, you'll know it and others will know it; or pick up an acoustic guitar and write a simple verse, chorus, verse joint. It's damn hard. Damn hard! Ain't no place to hide! Same shit with the career, distribution, and getting paid.

Seeing you live, the performance is part multimedia presentation, part one man band, part poetry, part performance art. Is the live performance as or more important than the products and objects that you create?

Until last year I never had a beautiful studio. I

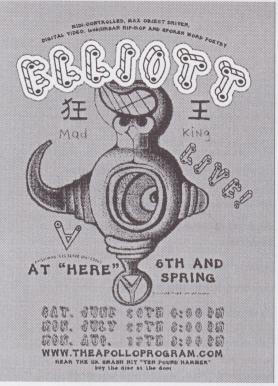


Cranbrook, how has design changed for you

Cranbrook. I loved it as a student, and I love it now. I believe in it. I find it mad ironic that

since you got out of school in '93?

Wow. Party line aside, I love the idea of



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I'm the head of the department. As I mentioned, I've given absolutely no care whatsoever to how my work fits in to this thing called design, and yet here I am, on some levels, at the epicenter. Design is dramatically different in its manifestations, but I think it's unchanged at the core. What does that mean? I think if your doing it right, the form of the shit is irrelevant.

As a teacher, what have you learned or discovered that makes going back to Cranbrook Important? Do you feel strongly about the Cranbrook design lineage?

I've learned that being small gets you nowhere. I've learned—to steal a quote from Dune— that "fear is the mind killer." I've learned that the teacher learns the most, and that teaching can be a beautiful, beautiful thing. ¶ Cranbrook design lineage? It's extremely important, and simultaneously irrelevant. It's important for my students to realize that Cranbrook has torn the roof off the mother; that Cranbrook designers have torn some shit up. When I was a student here, Lorraine Wild spent some time with us, and basically called us out. She held a meeting

where she reminded us of our responsibility—the responsibility to work hard. There is a responsibility to live up to the name. But I don't want to sound like Prince Charles, that shit only goes so far. The institution has a DNA. It has a spirit that works. The best policy on an interpersonal level is to work your ass off, and burn down the house of your forefathers.

You once asked me, "What would you rather have, no money and no problems or more money and more problems?" How does the working for money or the man aspect of your professional career interact with and react to your self initiated work?

Biggie had it right and wrong: I want money. I will and do make money from my work. I will get paid, but not so I can chill in my sky blue BMW X5 with 22 inch rims and Playstation in the headrests—that shit is hollow. I will get paid for opportunity. I want access to opportunity and cash is the key. Music and shipping and posters and Canon XLIs take cold hard cash. I refuse to buy that starving artist bullshit. But, I think it was Picasso who said, and I paraphrase, "If they locked me in prison

and took away my paint, I'd paint with spit upon the wall."

What advice would you give to a kid coming out of school interested in becoming a successful graphic designer?

Get a good education. I'm not talking sheepskin from some institution. I'm talking about dedication to a process of surrounding yourself with people you can learn from. Always set your sights high. Strive.

In the last six years you have been a freelance designer, a font shop, a publisher, an international performer and now the head of a design department. What is in store for you the Apollo Program in the future?

I've got mad plans. I've got a few top secret projects. I've got my dreams. But, when it comes to the road map, that shit stays in the vault, 'till it drops. There's nothing like a blowhard who says, "I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that," and then rolls snake eyes. As a kid, my pops would say to me over and over and over, "Actions speak louder than words." I hope to stay on course, stay true and aim high.

ikki McClure's intricate paper cut illustrations take my breath away. Each time I pick up one of her artist books or see one of her illustrations, I find myself getting lost in the delicate, swooping lines. The nature of her work—each picture is painstakingly cut from a single sheet of black paper—inherently draws the eye inwards, as each element has to be connected to the one next to it in some way, creating a fragile network of shapes and lines.

Equally as appealing about McClure's work to me is her choice of subject matter. Her serene pictures of nature and her lilting portraits of animals offer a peaceful oasis from the visual overload of city life.

But perhaps the thing that attracts me most to McClure's pictures is the knowledge that I have *no idea* how she pulls them off. Like the way a sculptor can see a form in a block of stone and bring it into being with a chisel, McClure can create a picture out of a smooth sheet of paper using nothing but an Exacto knife. I couldn't possibly be more jealous.

I got a chance to speak with McClure about her artwork from her studio in Olympia, Washington. I'm sad to report that once our conversation was over, I still couldn't do anything with an Exacto knife but cut my finger.

Interview by Daniel Sinker

#### How long have you been doing artwork for?

That's a good question. It's hard to really tell, because you *always* draw. But then somehow the drawing becomes a way of making money. My first job that someone paid me for was in 1992, and that was to do illustrations for a book put out by the Department of Ecology.

#### Was that paper cut?

No, it was a linoleum cut.

How did you move into doing paper cut illustrations?

I went to Evergreen State College for technical drawing. I would do these extremely elaborate drawings of flies with a technical pen-I would get obsessed over the details. I wanted to move into forms that would make me less detail-oriented, so I went to linoleum prints. But I kept forgetting to flip the image [laughs]. Also, I was too impatient to see what I was making-you had to print it to see what you were doing. So then I went to scratch board, but then, I could get down to the details again and I drove myself crazy. I had gotten really good with a knife and one day my friend Tae Won Yu, said, "Why don't you try using that knife on paper?" I did and it was the light bulb moment—This is what I've wanted to make forever!

#### What year was that light bulb moment?

I made a book with the first paper cut I ever made, it was in '96.

Have you worked exclusively in paper cuts for the last five years?

Mostly. I've been experimenting with monoprints, doing letterpress printing, and I do watercolors. But I have the most fun when I make paper cuts. The water-

colors are also fun, but that's mostly vacation fun, like when I'm in Mexico or Alaska, or somewhere else far away.

What was the book you made with your first paper cut?

It was called Apple.

How many illustrations did it have?

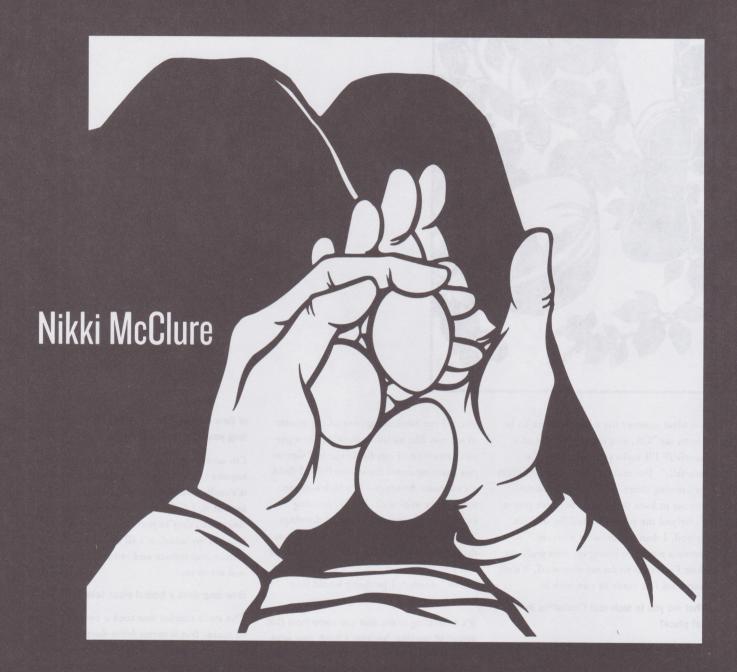
There were 15 little four by four illustrations. Actually, the third one that I made is one of my favorite paper cuts that I've ever made. Still. I look at it and I go, "Yeah, that's good!" Now, when I look at most of my older stuff, I go "Oh, the hands! They look like hot dog fingers." [laughs] But that one's a good, solid picture.

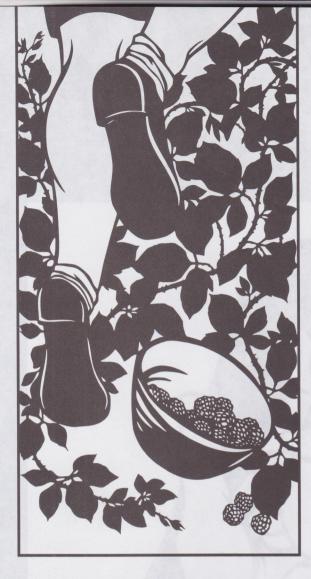
It's so ambitious to have picked up a new medium and right away say, "Oh, I'll do a 15 illustration book"

That's sort of how I get anything done. I'll say, "Oh, I'll have an art show" or "I'll make a book in a month." I don't know what I'm doing it on, but it'll be there. I over commit myself, and then have this feeling of responsibility. I don't want to let anyone down, so I keep making things.

Now that you've been doing this for five years, how much of your artwork is art for you and how much is it art for hire?

I would say that the way it's been going lately is that 75 percent is art for me and 25 percent is art for hire. It feels like a really good balance. You can't always produce from your heart. You need these resting times where you can just let your





own ideas simmer for a bit. It's nice to be able to say "Oh, you need a picture of a waterfall? I'll make you a picture of a waterfall." But meanwhile, your own ideas are brewing there. I think it's good too, because to have those work for hire pieces, it's helped me from that feeling of "Oh my god, I don't know what to make." It prevents me from doing my own stuff, so when I'm ready to do my own stuff, it's all there and I'm ready to run with it.

# What led you to technical illustration in the first place?

I've been thinking about that a lot lately—why was I drawn to science and not art?
Well one, I went to Evergreen, where you can kind of do whatever you want. I was being encouraged to look very carefully at things and observe very quickly what a leaf is. I feel like I have this really good eyesight

where I can catch things out of the corner of my eye, like a bird or lighting, or a person's emotion—I can find four leaf clovers just running down the soccer field. I did a lot of insect drawings— like with a microscope for a week with one fly, drawing every single hair—and botanical drawings. Technical drawing, for me, was looking at things as closely as I could. I think if I took art, I don't know if that would have given me all I needed. I probably would have been doing figure drawing forever.

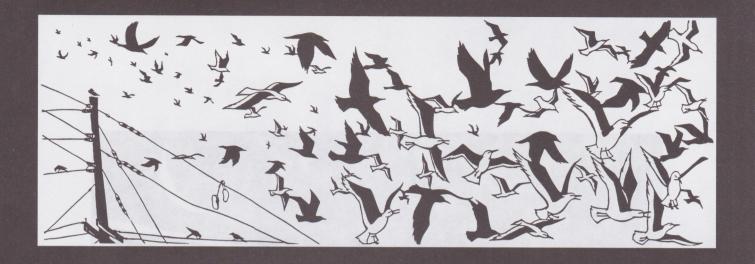
It's interesting to me that you came from that aspect of working, because I think your work is crazy detailed—like, for example, the stock market piece. It makes sense to me that you come from a technical, precise background instead of an art background, because honestly I think a lot of people do art because they want to be lazy. They're not particularly detail-oriented and don't want to spend a lot

of time on their pieces. I can't imagine how long your pieces take to make.

I'm actually getting quicker, but don't tell anyone [laughs]. It's funny that you say that it's really elaborate to you, because when I look at it, I feel like I've minimized all the lines until they're just the essence of a line. In my mind, it's all about how to reduce and reduce and reduce. It's minimal art to me.

#### How long does a typical piece take you?

The stock market one took a couple weeks to make. But it varies from days—but not too many days—to weeks. I can only work so long in a day because of arm issues—I'm trying not to get carpal tunnel, because I want to do this for a long time. I'm kind of treating myself like an athelete, so I'll work for a couple hours, then take a rest, then come back and work









for a few more hours. I can't work at night because I have to have really good light because the way I work is that I draw on the paper with pencil, so I'm cutting a black line on black paper. Sometimes the lines are very, very fine. I have this piece I just did with a barbed wire fence where I actually have the barbed wire on it, because I wanted to see if I could do it, and I could!

# How often do you choose an image simply to see if you can pull it off?

I'd like to think that in each piece of work, there is something that I challenge myself with. It's not always that way—sometimes you get lazy and just go for it or rely on what you already know—but I generally try to try something new, whether it's to make it super, ultra simple, or playing with the depth of field in one piece of paper. The stock market piece came from asking "How can I fit 80 or 90 guys in one piece of paper?"

How do you arrive at what imagery you want to use? The work I've seen—not your work for hire, but your personal work—is fairly consistent thematically: nature, animals, plants. Why are you doing that kind of imagery?

That's what I'm inspired by. Yesterday I went to the mountains and went swimming, and to me that was a way of working. I need to go walk in the woods: I need to see the way light and shadow fall on the trail from leaves, because they look like papercuts to me. My inspiration comes from the world. Outside my window are crows and gulls all the time—I'm captivated by their flight. ¶ I've been thinking about what I do, lately. People really respond to it, and so I want to know what I'm offering people. I feel like it being a piece of paper, it draws people in and they have to look at it really closely. To see the way that their eyes move around the paper once they realize that it's all one sheet of

paper . . . It's corny maybe, but it's almost environmental. I want people to stop and look at what's going on around them and how it's all connected. I also want people to think about the care that goes into it, and that they should take care. That someone's hand made it—I think that's really important, too. I like it when people put their noses on the glass! That's what inspires me.

#### Does every piece you do amaze you?

Some more than others. Sometimes when I sit back and look around my room, I get a really happy feeling. I think what maybe amazes me more about my work is the productivity of it. I make a hell of a lot of pictures—I'm constantly making things. When I'm done with one project, I just leap to another one. I actually have a hard time with follow through, because I'm already so excited about the next project, it's hard to tidy up the last one.

# Can you see yourself doing this in 30 or 40 years?

Making paper cuts?

Yeah.

No... Maybe. I definitely want to continue making books. I love paper cuts and I love the way they make me feel, but I like making books and printing things. I just took my calendar to the printer this morning, and that was really exciting. I love that. I know I'll always been communicating ideas through images.

# So that part will be lasting, but perhaps not in the form you're working now?

I still have my writing phase to go through, where I become a writer. And there's still that performance art thing that's not quite finished yet. And there's other incarnations. And then there's my berry farm that I'm going to have. [laughs]





# the













POND

gallery

estate warzone.

he turning of the new year in San Francisco was a strange moment in the city's history. Exhilarated by the prospect

of a seemingly endless period of economic growth, and giddy at the development of what seemed, at the time, like a tool that would revolutionize the world, Internet businesses citywide were celebrating their first few months or years in operation. Outrageously decadent office parties were building to a climax throughout Soma and along the newly developed live-work spaces in the Mission District. The city was still riding the perennial wave of a full-fledged dot-com revolution. And people were ready to continue parting like they did when the boom first hit in 1999. Limos rolling along the few remaining seedy areas on Valencia Street on their way to the trendier bars down the way might have noticed, just briefly, a small gaggle of artists, punks, activists and other assorted misfits loitering on the corner of Valencia and Duboce Streets, drinking, talking and celebrating what was a

truly peculiar event in *fin de siecle* San Francisco: the official opening party for a nonprofit gallery, performance space, and activist enclave in the heart of the city's bloodiest real

In the preceding year, the closing of art spaces and the eviction of the city's artists had become so familiar it was beyond cliché. From the death of the Epicenter record store to the domino closings of well-respected art spaces including ESP, the Victoria Room, and Four Walls; from the de facto eviction of nonprofits throughout the city, to the exodus of artists, activists, and entire working class neighborhoods; the city was rapidly changing to accommodate the new vanguard of young, mainly white, middle class Internet entrepreneurs. Art spaces closing or relocating to greener (read: cheaper) pastures had become a common occurrence. The idea of a new gallery opening—and a non-profit one at that-was just ridiculous.

Of course, ridiculous ideas were the rule at the time. Sell pet food directly though the Web? Sure. Start your own for-profit baby food distribution network via the almighty Internet? In a market like this, you'd be crazy not to! But the idea of a non-profit, experimental art space and community meeting place in the middle of a dying working class neighborhood? That was just a little too hopelessly idealistic, thank you very much.

Nine months later, most of the dot-com companies that created such havoc for the

area's residents have folded or fled, leaving large sections of city a vacant desert of relatively cheap workspace. The Pond space now far more than a gallery—continues to grow. Intent on displaying art that is at the crux of aesthetically unique and politically subversive thinking, It's quickly developed a reputation as an essential neighborhood meeting place and cultural center. In addition to its monthly gallery shows, and its acting as a meeting space for a wide range of community groups. Pond has since developed a fledgling zine resource center, a lecture series, and its own publishing imprint, Pondscum Press. And, judging by the turnout for their last collaborative show opening, the community surrounding Pond continues to grow ever widerspilling out of the doorway, off the sidewalk into the middle of Valencia Street.

For a space that started out as a crumbling storefront with a front window displaying one installation at a time, this is no small feat. I sat down with the two co-founders, Steve Shada and Marisa Jahn, a week before their most recent opening to ask them what they see in the future for the ever-deepening project that is Pond.

Interview by Eric Zass





#### Where did the idea for Pond come from?

Steve: We were traveling through the US at the time, hopping freight trains from Portland heading east, before Marisa was going to be speaking in London. We came back to San Francisco before she left. We'd already given up our apartment, and we didn't have any place to stay, or really much to do. We weren't sure if we were going to remain in San Francisco for much longer. There was really no reason for us to stay.

Marisa: We thought we were going to live in a boat.

Steve: We were considering living in a houseboat actually. I was going to build on this houseboat, and we were thinking about living there while we were building it. A friend of mine owned it. We came back and had two weeks before Marisa was going to be presenting a paper at the University of East London. We happened to be over at her brother's house one day, looking on his computer for possible alternatives, and saw this place listed.

Marisa: It should be said that when we came back from the trip, there was a less than one percent vacancy rate in San Francisco.

Steve: There were no spaces available.

Marisa: We were sure we weren't going to find anything. I told Steve not to even bother looking.

Steve: When I saw this place, Marisa didn't even want to come down and look at it. We called the guy and he said he was only going to be showing it for 30 minutes. He had just posted it five minutes before I checked. It was the first place we contacted. One thing led to another and we ended up getting the space pretty much that day.

Marisa: It also should be said that we were looking for a space that my brother could run his business out of. I came down here, and I realized when I was talking to the landlord that he was kind of into the arts. He wanted to know how we were going to use the space. There were a couple of people who were interested already, but he hadn't leased it out to them because he wanted someone to do something interesting with it. So I said, "Well, we could section off the window and show our own work in the window." And I started to describe this installation piece I had been thinking about doing for awhile. He was really into it.

Steve: He's kind of crazy. Also, the place was totally fucked up. There were huge pieces of the ceiling missing; there were leaks all over the place. The place was totally destroyed. There were tons of mice and rats and cockroaches and dust and dirt and garbage. He didn't want to put any money into the thing. "Well," I said, "I'm a carpenter." We told him that we would be willing fix the place up for rent credit. That and the fact that he was into Marisa's idea, along with the fact that Marisa's brother was willing to front the money because he needed office space so badly, got us the space.

#### What about the idea of the gallery?

Marisa: We had no intention of starting a gallery at all.

Steve: We were going to live in the space, and occasionally put our own installations in the storefront window. We had never intended to start an organization at all. But after we moved in and started fixing up the place, we realized that it would be kind of fucked to try to live here, but that it would be possible to make the entire front part a really nice gallery. We thought that it would be a really casual little space at first. But as we started talking to people while we were fixing it up, one thing lead to another and it just grew and grew and grew. ¶ It was at a time when a lot of alternative spaces were closing. Within a few months before we opened, several major galleries that were really important in terms of alternative art spaces in San Francisco shut down. It was at the height

of when people were getting evicted and everyone's rent was doubling. Artists were getting evicted and everyone was moving to Oakland or Emeryville. ¶ When people found out we were starting a new space and started asking us about it, we were really vague in terms of what it was going to be. The truth is, we didn't know ourselves! The ideas and concepts that formed Pond were formed by other people telling us how cool it would be if we did this and that, combined with our original idea of having a really down-to-earth, accessible place to show work we liked. ¶ We didn't want it to be just a gallery. We were interested more in breaking down the barriers between a gallery and a community space and making it available to people living in the community, not just transporting a bunch of art students and art critics into someone else's neighborhood. We were also interested in making politics and political activism an important part of that space. This evolved more and more into a definite idea of what we wanted. It sort of kept building-it still is building.

Marisa: In the first month or two that we were building it, people would inquire about Pond as if it were this already existing entity. We thought, "Well, OK. I guess it's real."

Steve: I've always been intimidated by the idea of starting my own space. Being a dropout from college, I was always intimidated by the art crowd and the idea of a gallery as this thing you had to know about. It felt like you had to know the right things about art before you even entered a gallery, let alone before you create one. I've always thought that it was really fucked that so many people are excluded from the art scene because they didn't know the

right names to drop. I've always thought that there was no real sense of community there. At the same time, I've always done art. I've always been closely attached to art—whether it's appreciating it as a viewer or actually making my own.

Marisa: In San Francisco, I feel that there are two main "alternative spaces" that show and support local artists, but you have to have a full set of slides in order to be shown in either of them, which I don't have. After I finished school, I thought, "What am I supposed to do now? I'm not really interested in those established spaces so much." They cater to a middle class, 30-something sort of crowd. Also, there are a number of institutionalized "youth outreach" art programs around primarily for teens, but for people who aren't that young, there's not really a great community space.

# How do you think Pond differs from a conventional gallery?

Steve: One thing that I've always felt has been the demise of a lot of great, interesting ideas is the fact that people who are doing them have to pay rent. It's a fact of life. You have to pay for the space that you're doing your work in. One of the big differences between Pond and most other galleries is that we take zero percent commission. We don't sell any work. The salability of a particular piece doesn't influence the type of work we show. We show the type of stuff we want to show—that is, generally, under-represented, or experimental art-which can be any number of different styles, from graffiti to really weird stuff that no one else will show. Whatever we show, we're not influenced by anything other than the quality and importance of the work. We're not making any money on the show. The shows are all free to get into and if an artist does happen to sell some of their work, they receive all of the money from it. For that reason. It's not important to us to have to make rent every month by selling artwork. Other spaces take a commission so that they can their pay rent. Inevitably that means economic factors will dictate what you show, in some regard. Eventually, it will affect what kind of work you show. By not taking commission, we're able to show whatever we want based purely on the merit of the work. I think that's an important difference. ¶ The other difference is that we don't have the same requirements many other spaces do. Anybody who we feel does good work to show can show it here. Our decisions are not based on what school you went to or who you know or how well you're doing. They're based on what your work says to us when we see it. It's not like we're looking to be crowd-pleasers. If we think it's good work, we'll show it. We don't show work based on how many people it will draw in. We base it on how it touches us personally.

Marisa: One of the problems with other non-profits is that there's a discrepancy between the audience who they want to work with and who their supporters actually are. Sometimes it will be an economic discrepancy. It's far easier to make money by catering to people who are wealthy. It's easier to fund things through auctions where you can charge \$50 for people at the door, and then have silent bidding starting at \$1000. That has always been slightly irritating to me, because I could never pay that kind of money. We're trying not to have that kind of economic discrepancy determine who we cater to. We're trying to do more grassroots fundraising.

Steve: We're not doing this purely out of idealism either. Every other gallery is making their money that way. Everyone else is doing the fundraiser and silent auction or whatever. It's working to allow them to pay their rent. At least for now, we're more than willing to use our day jobs to pay for this space until we can find grant money and raise a larger membership. Maybe in the future we'll have to do

that, but right now we're more than willing to support it ourselves. In the long
run, hopefully it's going to mean that
we'll be better able to receive grant money
and more support from philanthropists
and people who have money to support
the arts. Because we're committed to a
strong set of ideals, we feel we'll be far
more favorable to receive grants.

Marisa: I actually disagree. I don't think grant-makers care. They're really more concerned with track history. I don't think they necessarily do care about your idealism. They care if you're able to meet your intended goals. Part of it is that they want you to be financially viable. Of course with a non-profit, silent auctions are one of the ways you raise funds—if not the foremost way.

# How has that sort of DIY mentality influenced the way Pond is run?

Steve: Punk music first introduced me to the concept of DIY, the idea of being able to create your own environment, and being able to dictate and control how you live your life. One of the reasons I moved to San Francisco was because, when I was living in the shithole Sacramento foothills, I heard about Gilman Street and the Epicenter. I really liked the concept and ideals that those spaces were founded on. They definitely influenced the way this space is run. It's one of the reasons we do things the way we do, I think. ¶ One interesting thing about our space is that, because we're based in a pretty strong set of ideals, we see the same people at every show. I don't think any other gallery around has such a loyal crowd. We're not for everybody, but the people who like what we're doing really do support us. We just sent out our first solicitation for

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SOMEONE ELSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD.

membership, which is one way we're hoping to raise money for Pond, and we got . . .

Marisa: . . . about 70 percent returned.

Steve: And that's within the first two weeks after sending it out. ¶ Not only that, but we've been keeping track of the people who've been coming through. I would say that we still have the people who came to our first show coming to every other show, every month. We're stilling getting IOO to 200 new people signing onto our mailing list per month.

# Do you think that's you because you have a similar aesthetic to all of your shows?

Steve: I think it's for a couple of reasons. I would say that maybe 80 percent of the people on our mailing list live within a five block radius of here. It's also important that we're on the ground level of this building. Unlike other galleries, we're not behind some curtain. You don't have to go up any stairs; you don't have to go through some corridor or take an elevator to get to our space. We're right on the fucking sidewalk with a huge window displaying the entire space. I think for a lot

of our members, this is the only space they ever go to. A lot of people on our mailing list are not art crowd people at all, they're people that live around here. This is the only art thing that they ever do. We're definitely more accessible than most other places.

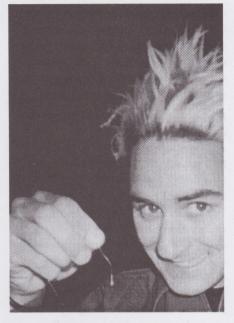
To what extent do you think that the community influences your decisions on what you show and to what extent is it your own choice?

Steve: We found the people who were part of our first show through people who we knew in common. Since then, those people have turned us on to other artists. We were sort of looking for Rubber O Cement, who were our first show. In the midst of our looking for them, Grux, who is one of the people in Rubber O Cement, happened to knock on our door and hand us a flyer for one of his shows. I said, "We've been looking for you. We've been looking to show your work." He lives right down the street. ¶ The next two people whose work we showed were people who happened to stop by the gallery. Everyone who has walked through the door has talked to one of us, either Marisa or myself. We usually say hello and talk to them, ask them questions, because it is a small, intimate space. Through our conversations we realized that they were doing stuff that we're into. Every show we've done has been influenced by the community. One way or another, they've been directly influenced by somebody introducing us to somebody else, or somebody coming in and wanting to see the work we're showing and us wanting to show their work.

Marisa: One problem that we've had is that guys are more inclined to come in or to send proposals than women are. Since we've taken a passive approach to curating, we need to, start seeking out women artists that we like. There are plenty of women who do interesting work, they just haven't walked in with their work on them.

Were you ever afraid that one element of Pond, the political or artistic focus, would eclipse the other?

Marisa: Well, we definitely want to make it more political.



Steve: It's difficult to find political work that doesn't suck.

#### Art and politics don't usually mix very well.

Steve: It's hard to make political artwork that isn't didactic. There are a few people who can pull it off well, but they're already fairly well known. They're not really under-represented. I think Eric Drooker and Winston Smith have pretty much gotten the props that they deserve for doing political artwork. I think both of their work is awesome, but they're also huge figures in the art world that show a lot of work around. It's also hard to combine politics and art in an experimental way. It's really very difficult to do.

Marisa: I feel like, for me, the context and the conditions in which it's shown and its audience are what politicizes artwork, too. Hans Haacke is a political artist. He talks about issues like the Holocaust. As soon as work like that is shown in the MOMA, it



becomes less political, less immediate. Whereas if it's shown in an art squat or on the street, that changes things a lot.

Steve: It depends on your perimeters of political, too. Issues of race, ethnicity, class, and culture are political issues. We've been pretty successful at showing work that represents those sorts of themes. Some types of work become political in the very act of showing it, because of the genre or style of work that it is. Graffiti is an example of a very commodifiable art form right now that used to be a revolutionary form of aesthetic destruction and vandalism. It's become accepted more into the mainstream of the art world now, but when you take graffiti and do something different with it, or have a different message to go with it, it becomes a political issue. When you have an artist who isn't a white straight male using that art form, it also changes the context. Issues of power are issues of politics—whether it's race, class, gender or sexual orientation, they are political issues. I think it's not as hard to find good artwork that falls into those kinds of perimeters as it is to find artwork that is, you know, the statue of liberty flipping everybody off instead of raising the torch. It's not something so blatant and obviously "political." It definitely is hard to combine the two, and sometimes we don't show work that is totally political. We try to offset that by having special events, and providing our space for community groups to meet in.

#### How many community groups meet here?

Steve: Not as many as we'd like so far. We've been so preoccupied with other things-like starting our publication and laying the foundation for the public art program, and also doing the routine, daily things that are necessary to running a non-profit—that it's been difficult to do any outreach to other groups. The October 22nd Coalition Against Police Brutality is one of the groups that we will probably be in contact with in the future. The Free Radical Collective is another we've been in contact with, though we haven't actually done anything with them yet. They've already got their nonprofit status, but don't have a home yet. There are a lot of groups that we want to do more work with, but it's been hard to organize it. We're still open-ended as far as community groups. I think we're going be doing an event with La Casa de las Madres, which is a women's shelter. They're going to do a fundraiser here in the next couple months.

## What advice would you give to someone starting up a similar space?

Marisa: Having a financial structure in place is important—which is kind of related to what we were talking about before. On one hand, we don't have art auctions, but as a younger space, it's hard to find grants. It also takes a lot of capital—both time and cash—before you can get to a position of writing grants. Our space isn't big enough to rent out or have music events or throw the occasional rave to raise money.

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THAT COMMUNITY.

Steve: With the amount of money that we're paying, we could get a larger space that would allow us to rent it out and have events we charge for. ¶ One of the things that has allowed us to keep going is that we had zero expectations starting; our expectations were founded by other people's wants and the realization that there was a need for a space like ours. Letting those needs formulate the concept for the space was important. We've always wanted a space like this. Only, we never thought we'd be running it. Even though we both wanted to start a space, we just never thought it would be possible. Our success so far has been based around the fact that we are so accessible and are really making an effort to become part of the community, and not just being inclusive and remaining part of the art community, or part of the punk community, or part of that sort of alternative community, but becoming part of the geographical community in which we live, and trying to do some outreach for that community. @

adie Shaw is a carving a bloody niche for herself in independent film, bringing a determinedly DIY aesthetic to the good ol' bloodand-guts gore cinema. It's a genre notorious for churning out bigbucks films that have no suspense or any sense of quality, but Shaw, after teaching herself the necessary make-up and special effects, manages to make her films not only affordable but believable.

The 28-year-old San Francisco filmmaker started making films and

The 28-year-old San Francisco filmmaker started making films and music videos six years ago without any kind of formal training—she simply used cheap cameras and a bunch of friends—and now with collaborator Sarah Reed, she's finishing a feature-length movie she shot for less than the price of a decent used car.

Set for release this fall, *Charm* twists classic horror convention into a modern critique of apathy and alienation, backed with an original score featuring new material from groups like the Need, Deerhoof, the Aislers Set and the Thrones. It's a bold new step for Shaw—because if *Charm* proves anything, it's that filmmakers don't need studio money, studio power or studio rules. If that doesn't have the suits at Miramax or Artisan quavering under their desks, it should. When they figure out that she's talented as well, they'll run screaming tear-ass out into the gloomy night. And that's what she wants. Boo.

Interview by Chris Eng

SADIE SHAW

Finding the horror in the everyday seems to be the predominant theme in your work. How does that fit in with the way that you see the world?

Well, I think my love of horror is . . . well, I really like effects. I really like special effects of all kinds. I mean, this definitely isn't for both Sarah and I, but for me, I just really love the thrill of horror movies in the same way I like roller coasters. I like being shocked and surprised, and suspense and twists at the end. I just really like the psychological behind horror, but I also like the way it looks a lot. Aesthetically, it's just really pleasing. Also, there's this part of people's personalities with impulse and doing things they can't do, and those can actually be acted out in films, as opposed to real life where you

In your short film Madeline's Valentines Day Party and your videos for Emily's Sassy Lime,

have to stay civil.

Yeah, kind of. The same as John Waters or some Italian gore, which is over the top. You can see it in *Madeline*—it's really, really campy, and I love camp. I think it's great, and I also really love watching comedies. It was just that with this movie we decided if we were going to put as much energy as we saw we were going to put into it, we wanted it to be something that really meant a lot to us.

Gore and horror films are notorious for requiring higher budgets, as a general rule. How did you work around that when you don't really have one?

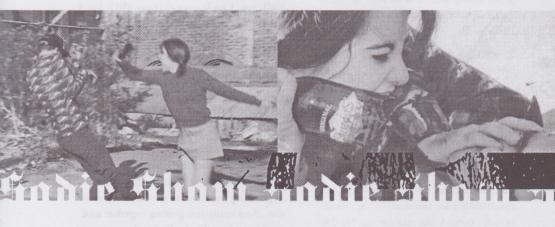
Well, we've been really, really creative with our limitations. I make all my own blood, and around Halloween we buy all the fake skin we can. I have all my lighting that I've bought from thrift stores—I have over ten light kits. The same with my Super-8 cameras—I've just always got them from thrift stores. I've gone through a lot of

of our friends were really devoted. ¶ So were the bands. We decided first off that with the soundtrack, we wanted it to be a true soundtrack as opposed to putting rock songs to scenes, but we also wanted a variety of people—we didn't just want one person. So we cut it all up and we had, like, 15 different people that we had picked that we thought would have the idea of soundtrack work. Like the Thrones and the Replikants-they're all obviously good at that. So we sent them clips of the movie, and had them write it straight to it. We were worried that they wouldn't make any sense with

sound engineer for the whole movie, has a really good knack of making it flow and make

each other, but Tim

Green, who's the



you insert horror into really mundane situations. I thought that was an interesting angle.

Yeah, and it's really worked in Charm, too. It's definitely living your life and having the most shocking, fucked-up shit happen. ¶ The thing about Charm that really is different—and it's because I collaborated with someone else—is that instead of being funny and almost silly gore, it's really heartbreaking and, in theory, you're not supposed to laugh. It's supposed to be really serious. There's a ton of blood and murder and it is a horror movie, but it's a horror/heartbreak movie.

So, a lot more comedy slips into your solo stuff, would you say?

crappy ones, but have found really great ones too.

So you shot the whole thing on film? That's amazing. How long did the whole shoot take?

It was shot on Super-8, and we finished shooting in the fall of last year. That probably took six months total. We actually had a casting call with fliers, and we did screen tests with people who were our friends, but also with people we didn't know. We had an amazing crew—the main actress and Matt Mayfield and just tons of other friends who volunteered all their time and spent long days with us. We would have these weekend-long shoots, because everybody still had their jobs. All

sense,
and I'm
really
excited
about the
way the music
works in the

How much has the film cost to make?

We made this movie for about \$3000.

Wow! You beat out Robert Rodriguez. I think it took him \$5000 to make *El Mariachi*! That's amazing.

Yeah, I know. And we also had help. People really came out and helped us for free, and they were actually really talented people. Our actress is an aspiring actress, and she's totally gonna work for money, I can tell. And Matt Mayfield, who's our assistant, has done tons of photography and film. All of these people were generous enough to just volunteer. Tim Green gets paid to do the work he does, but he volunteered all this time to work with us and he's put hours and hours, weeks, and months into making the sound perfect.

#### How big was your crew?

Usually, on each shoot, we had our actors—there were IO main actors and then there were extras at parties and dance club scenes—and then we'd have a crew of about five extra people, other than me and Sarah, to hold the lights and the mics. The one person that was there constantly was Matt Mayfield. In some parts it was just him.

#### Did you have a full sound set-up?

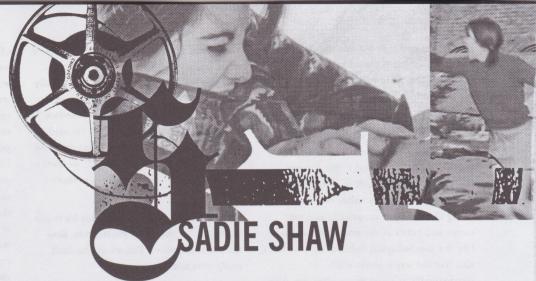
No. We just did it for a scratch track. There's actual Super-8 sound film, but you need a camera with a special crystal in it for synching, and we didn't have that, because we have cheap cameras. We decided early on that we were just going to do the best we could. I mean, there's some old films in the '50s where they did that. They would film and they knew people were going to come and do their lines later and it looks kind of dubbed, but I'm hoping at best it's going to look like a French dubbed movie.

#### That's how Italian films are still made, isn't it?

Yeah, exactly. The only reason we had a boom mic and stuff was just so that we would remember. We ended up using it a lot, because people ad-libbed and we had to go back and listen specifically to what they said.

#### How was that part of the process?

That was a very detailed, grueling process. We set up our four-track in Tim's studio, and we'd have people there watching it on a TV and just doing it as good as they can. And it just took forever to get it right, because it was really, really hard.



#### Was there a lot of ad-libbing and improv stuff?

Not really. We had a specific script. We didn't rely on giving the actors that much leeway. We didn't ask people to do that, but in situations like the party and the nightclub, where people were just hanging out anyway, a lot of people said some pretty genius stuff that we kept in there. The specific lines between the actors were all scripted.

### So what has the feature-filmmaking process been like for you?

It's been really interesting. I think it would be funny for another filmmakerany other filmmaker-to see how we did things, because we had to make up things as we went along. I took a lot of photography in school, but I'd never taken any film classes, and we didn't really know specifically what the routine was, which actually turned out really great. We did things just the way we wanted to, which were probably not traditional but they worked. We did things the long way a lot and kind of chased our tails, but we just communicated a lot. There's so many steps in making a movie and you just have to keep each other on task.

# How easy was the transition from still photography to movies?

Well, there's a lot less instant gratification. With photography you get the results really soon, and it's been pretty trying, because it takes so long to get any gratification with this, you know? You'll have a good shooting day, but you're not going to see the film for months. And you'll hear a tape

back from a band, but you don't see it to film for a really long time. It's a lot of work for the pay-off being really far away.

And now you manage a record label, perform in a band, and are co-writing, directing and producing a feature-length movie. Is that about right?

Well, yes. I no longer manage 5RC, but I used to. And I'm in the Lies—and so is Sarah, and now I work at Aquarius Records, which is this great record store in San Francisco.

# How hard is it to juggle back and forth between the different disciplines?

Well, there's a lot of similarities [between] writing music, being in the band, and making the movie. Sarah and I do both, and we're both really good at organizing our time as productively as we can. And really just getting together and getting it done kind of takes the same energy. So it's not that hard; it's not like switching gears necessarily.

# Are you going to take some time off after you finish this?

Yeah. I think I'll probably start writing again because I've been working on this for so long. Both Sarah and I are ready to do something completely different. So, I do think that there's kind of like this itch to just start doing something different right away. But it's gonna be pretty low-key in the beginning because we need a break. We've been working on it pretty intently for a long time. It's our first feature-length—I had no idea how much work it really was.

### the underground speaks for itself:

**Black Flag** Kathleen Hanna Noam Chomsky Sleater-Kinney **Thurston Moore** Jello Biafra Frank Kozik Ian MacKave Steve Albini **Ruckus Society Winston Smith** Porcell Jody Bleyle Mordam Records Los Crudos Negativland Matt Wobensmith Chumbawamba

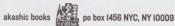


**Central Ohio Abortion** Access Fund **Art Chantry** Ted Leo Jem Cohen Voices in the Wilderness **Duncan Barlow** Jon Strange

## WE OWE YOU NOTHING

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# LITTLE MISS ATTITUDE JOCELYN SUPERSTAR

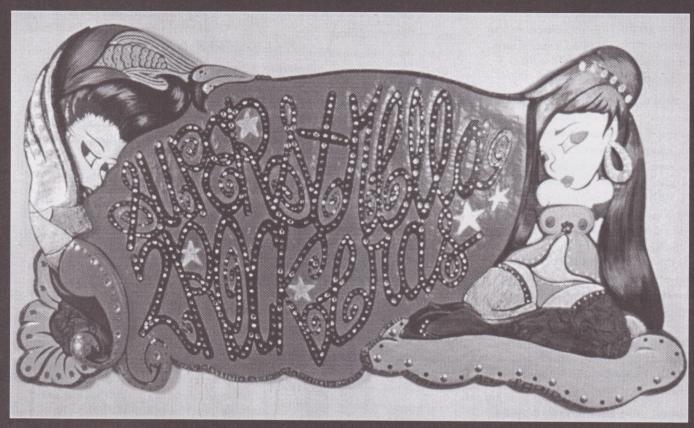
ittle Miss Attitude and Jocelyn Superstar, two graffiti artists from San Francisco's Mission District, have played a large part in contributing to the look of the city's streets, alleys, and overall environment. From large mural-like bombs of contorted bubble lettering, to more ephemeral barrages of stickering, postering, and graffiti "throw-ups" of cartoon characters pro-woman slogans, the two have

defined their controversial styles and attitudes in the eyes of the local authorities as well as among the world of graffiti artistry.

Their work is slightly different than most other graffiti you'll see around, owing to their foregrounding of a distinctly feminine perspective, and their own unique blend of traditional graffiti motif and more experimental design. Extending the usual modes of urban renegade

artistry, Jocelyn Superstar and Little Miss Attitude have been known to kidnap and meticulously re-design everything from newspaper dispensers to entire bathrooms with elaborate mixtures of collage, sticker, and spray-art design.

Recently, the two artists have teamed up to put together an installment at the nonprofit Pond gallery in San Francisco (much of the



Dangerous Bait: Fishing for a Bass

artwork reproduced here is from that show). Their collaborations prove as creative and eclectic indoors as they are spread and sprayed across the walls of the city. Cuts and clips of random advertisements, detourned comics and other clips of city detritus, drawn and painted over, sprinkled with glitter, and covered in sketches and drawings make up much of their style...

But the factor that distinguishes Little
Miss Attitude and Jocelyn Superstar from a lot
of conventional graffiti, as well as from traditional, "feminist" art, is their playful and unpretentious approach. Where many graffiti artists
fight for space and attack one another with
macho posturing, Jocelyn Superstar and Little
Miss Attitude seem more interested in working
together to transform the urban landscape into

a thing of beaty. And where many traditional artists create to confuse, the two seem more interested in sharing their messages directly.

A few weeks before their opening at Pond, I had the chance to sit down with the two and talk about the why's and how to's of unabashedly "public" art, the importance of the graffiti subculture, and artistic communication.

Interview by Eric Zass

#### What attracted you to street art?

Jocelyn Superstar: I got into graffiti through a lecture I saw by this well-known graffiti artist, Twist. A week later I was tagging and a month after that I was bombing and doing "throw-ups". Tie-I was my teacher. After I started tagging, he taught me how to do throw-ups. He's kind of the person I credit as my teacher. He was murdered on March 18, 1998. He was only 18 years old. He was the coolest kid in the whole wide world. Everyone who was friends with him—and even some who weren't—still do his name, out of respect. I still do his name. In fact, I've been doing it more than my own stuff lately.

Little Miss Attitude: I've always been attracted to public art, posters and murals. I've done more traditional murals and also protest flyers and things like that for years. I did some for the Strippers Union: "Live Nude Girls Unite!" My work has always surrounded protest and activism. So when I started doing graffiti I realized it was just another form of protest or public art. When I got together with Jocelyn and we started to do our thing, our collaborative pieces, we just clicked. It just came naturally. I started doing stickers. And I had a cartoon character I'd been working on, Little Miss Attitude, and I started doing her as graffiti. She's in the works right now to be made into animation. I just finished storyboarding the first page of a 15 page treatment.

#### How did you go about becoming Little Miss Attitude and Jocelyn Superstar?

LMA: I was in this motorcycle club made up of women who used to ride Harleys—biker dykes and stuff. The girls in the club were into S&M. Sometimes they would bring their slaves with them—it was a wild scene. I drew a leather-clad girl wearing a hat and smoking a joint and printed the image up on T- shirts and started giving them and selling them to the group. I sold out of the shirts almost immediately. I've done three reprints of them now. Finally I said, "You know, she must mean something

to people." She definitely meant a lot to me. I started developing her attitude and her personality, exploring the way women carry themselves in different ways. Then I started doing comic strips about her and her adventures. So now I've written a script, and I'm storyboarding and animating it bit by bit. She's come alive! Doing her as graffiti was so exciting. I would spray paint her on a wall and days later there'd be gang lettering up in her headband . . .

JS: Yeah, the gangsters liked her.

LMA: Graffiti for me-well, all my arthas been about communication. I've always done flyers, posters, and murals, that had to communicate something to people. So when I did her, I was really talking to tough girls or anyone who wants to be empowered somehow. I teach teenage girls in the Mission District right now. They have very distinct language they use, and very distinct codes. I see it in the art they do; I see it in the way they talk to each other and talk to me. There is a very specific type of communication going on and I find it fascinating. Graffiti is similar. It's a secret language. There's a certain type of person who will understand it.

#### Why do you choose to do public art, as opposed to the galleries?

LMA: I just thought the gallery was too inaccessible to people. My first shows were in cafes, and I got more of a reward out of that than I could have in the galleries. People would actually come up say something to me or leave me little notes. It was just more down to earth.

JS: To me, the art that's happening on the street, whether it's graffiti or traditional Mexican murals is so much more accessible in my daily life. I like that it's for everyone.

LMA: An art gallery is a different country—you have to know its language. And you have to inspire critics to write about you, which means you have to create something they can understand.

JS: My favorite artist is Andy Warhol. I love pop art. I love the feminist art move-

ment of the '70s. I just think that what was happening in the art world at that time was really cool and electrifying.

LMA: I like pop art too, but I think my roots are strongly embedded in sort of low-brow comic-book world, and probably old animation, like late 1950s and early 1960s Hanna Barbera. I've always been really fascinated by cartoons. I drew tons of them when I was a little girl. The art that started to inspire me when I was in my teens and early 20s was definitely feminist art. Being an exotic dancer for 12 years, the whole idea of sexuality is pivotal for me, as it is for a lot of women. When I view that early feminist work, I'm really impressed with how direct it was. Just to display that part of a woman's body: a vagina. That is so strong-oh my god, how much more power can you possibly have? It's also so minimalist to take that part of a woman's body and display it openly.

#### How did you start working together?

LMA: I met Jocelyn Superstar out in the street because she sidebusted me. I threw up this little kitty and she wrote next to it, and a little bit on top of it: "Yo, Isis, we got to get together." That was definitely a graffiti no-no. It just so happened that I was teaching a class near to her classes. I go to the bathroom there, and she totally gave it a whole new look, covered it with her own design. I found out she had a studio down the way, so I left her a note with my number. She called and we went out and that big purple "Superattitude" was the first bomb we put up.

#### What's the etiquette with sidebusting?

JS: A lot of people get really pissed off if you cover any of their piece. If somebody's a friend, then it might not be a big deal, unless they're a hard-ass asshole. Some people like to get into fights over *everything*. There are times when it's appropriate, and there are times when it's not. That's how I feel.

#### When you bomb, how do you work out who does what?

JS: If you're doing throw-ups, you usually don't. You just start painting. Throw ups are really quick things. If you're doing it on the street, and there's a good chance you could get caught, you have to do it really fast. Five minutes would be tops. I

THE ART THAT'S HAPPENING ON THE STREET, WHETHER IT'S GRAFFITTI OR TRADITIONAL MEXICAN MURALS IS SO MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE IN MY DAILY LIFE. I LIKE THAT IT'S FOR EVERYONE used to go out with Tie-I, and he would do a throw-up in two minutes. He was so fast. He would do two cans at once. He would do throw ups on Valencia Street or on Mission in the middle of the day—he was nuts. He didn't even care. If anyone saw him or yelled at him, he would start running. He always wore layers of clothes. He would strip off his black shirt and come around the corner casually wearing a white one. ¶ With pieces you plan out, you usually have to do drawings for those. They can take three hours or five hours, or even a couple of nights. Sometimes there are interruptions: police or crowds or sketchy activities going on around you; people getting busted for drugs or whatever.

#### How do you usually prepare to go out tagging?

LMA: I usually wear a mini skirt and heels.

JS: If you were going tagging out on the street, that's what you would want to wear. You'd want to look like just a girl. You wouldn't want to look like you were doing graffiti at all. But if you're bombing or doing throw-ups, you'd want to wear all black. You'd want to blend in. There are different ways to think about it. It depends where you're planning to be. It's to your advantage to look like a girl, because people won't think that you're doing graffiti. But if you're going to a place that might be dangerous, or you're going to be somewhere dark, you should wear black.

LMA: Make sure your cans are organized well in your bag so they don't rattle when you're running out of there.

JS: If you were going to be bombing on the street, it would be better to not take a backpack, or if you do, take a really small thing that you can tuck under your arm so it doesn't look like a backpack. When cops are driving around looking for taggers—which they do now because it's become such a big thing for the city to crack down on—they're looking for people with backpacks or messenger bags. If you could have it somehow concealed, or carry a briefcase—something like that.

#### Have you ever had issues with another graffiti artist?

JS: When I first started writing graffiti, there was this one kid that hated me



Las Vegas Vixens



The Perfect Pussy



**Divine Golden Confection** 





because I wrote over his friend's tag or something. I didn't really know the rules. I went over people all the time. He got really pissed off at me. A lot of people hated me when I first started.

LMA: Yeah. If she liked you, she sidebusted you.

IS: This guy started crossing out all my stuff. I used to work at Pearl Art and Craft Supply. One day I went to work to find that he'd written all over the store: "Jocelyn is a ho." He painted all this stuff on the store. Luckily, there was enough other graffiti that none of the managers of the store put two and two together. After the spray painting, someone dumped enamel all over the front of the store, gallons of it, through the gate all over the glass. It was such a fucking mess. Usually, in the graffiti world, if you have an argument with someone like that, the only way to settle it is through a fight. This is a rule really for boys, but a lot of the boy rules have to apply to girls, too. You have to fight people to decide who's on top.

LMA: What about when you go wall to wall and battle that way?

JS: They do that too, battling people on the wall, crossing one another's stuff out. It can only go on for so long before you get jumped by somebody's friend. Then you have to be like, "All right. This person's the king. I'm sorry." Guys get seriously beat up, really bad. I was supposed to fight the guy who'd been writing all over Pearl. I said I would fight him. I heard that he wasn't that big of a guy. One day he came into the store and was like "I don't really want to beat you up because you're a girl. Because you're a girl, I'm going to let you off." We ended up shaking on it. That guy was a major piecer, and I ruined so many of his pieces. Two weeks later I got fired by Pearl. My manager was like, "Get out of here, I don't want to see you in the store again." That was really the best job in the world. That asshole made me lose it.

So much of graffiti culture seems like it's incredibly male-dominated and all about territoriality. Do you think your work is different, coming from a female perspective?

LMA: I think guys tend to create secret codes for themselves, instead of trying to communicate. "We're not going to tell you our secrets if you don't already know."

Jocelyn would sidebust and write things next to the work she admired. I don't think a guy would have done that. That was a very unique way of meeting.

JS: I used to write directly to other writers a lot. Boys don't ever do that, unless they're writing to a friend. You're not supposed to communicate at all, other than your piece. That's supposed to be your only message.

LMA: What she did next to me—writing a little note next to my piece—was considered "jocking." Jocking means kissing up to someone.

JS: There were some people around who would call me "Jock-elyn." You were supposed to be mad at me for doing that.

LMA: In a way the innocence we brought to it is what brought us together. By not going by the rules, we came onto a sort of relationship that's been getting strong. When I met Jocelyn and she started telling me about these rules, I thought it was crazy. Where I grew up in Kansas, graffiti was free expression. People would do it any way they wanted to, on bathroom walls, on trees. It wasn't so high art-oriented like it is here in the city. I'm very much an activist and an anarchist. I think that people should have a right to voice their opinions any way they feel, so long as no one's getting killed. These rules are sort of continuing that ridiculous game that socalled "high" art plays. It's repeating an attitude that's very stifling. If you're a young person starting out as an artist, you should have every right to say whatever you want to, without some idiot who has two years more experience than you pull seniority.

How do you think somebody who wanted to get into bombing and graffiti art should begin?

JS: People get into graffiti for different reasons. If you're like me and are into it because you're interested in printing and fonts and writing, you start with the print style you already have and then start to embellish it. Choose three, four, or five letters and just write them over and over again—a million times. Just sit there IO

hours a day for a month and keep writing it. From that print style, you can develop throw-up style letters, which are sort of bubble-shaped. Letters that don't have any holes in them. Something really quick to do. So you would work on your throw up letters next. After that you work on piecing letters. Piecing is the hardest thing. Then you want to tag everywhere you fucking can. Tag everyplace—don't question it, just tag. That's how you get up. If you can set goals for yourself like, "Today I'm going to put up at least one hundred stickers," or, "Today I'm going to tag in ten different bathrooms." Gradually, you'll see that you're covering a lot of space. My friend Royal, who lives in New York City, actually has a map on her wall and she'll actually plan it out so that she can hit every neighborhood. She wants to get up All City. If you're up All City, which means everywhere-and New York City is the best place to do that-then you are a king. She has a whole schedule written out, and Xs all over her map.

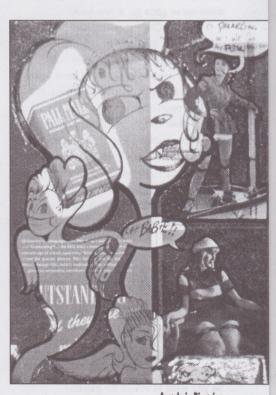
What do you get when you get to the top of that? When everybody knows your tag?

JS: For me it would be economic security, to make my mark in art history, to influence other people, to be a teacher to other people. More notoriety would mean more chances to work with other artists, more collaborations. There's a lot of satisfaction in that.

LMA: I pretty much agree with Jocelyn. I've always felt like an outcast in an outcasted system. As you get older, you look for a support system, and in the art world you meet really tight people. It's all about networking. If you don't know how to network, and you haven't developed some sort of support system, it's difficult to get into the art world and it's difficult to maintain your life as an artist. For me, it's not only economic and giving back to the community, it's also emotional.



Chola de Oro con Salsa Verde



Angels in Disguise

IF YOU'RE A YOUNG PERSON STARTING OUT AS AN ARTIST, YOU SHOULD HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT TO, WITHOUT SOME IDIOT WHO HAS TWO YEARS MORE EXPERIENCE THAN YOU PULL SENIORITY.

ay Ryan's concert posters adhere to one of the longest standing rules in promotional design: There's nothing like a giant bunny strapped to a man's back to sell a punk tour.

What's that? You say there's nothing in the rule book about giant bunnies? Well, what about skateboard-riding mice, or puppy anuses? No? How about astronauts being attacked by a legion of squirrels? Still nothing? Damn. I guess we've gotta get a new book.

Ryan, a Chicago native who prints his posters under the name of The Bird Machine, has been breaking new ground in punk poster design for six years now. While most poster artists create garishly colored pictures of hugely-proportioned women to sell the shows they're advertising, Ryan takes a much more subtle approach. Instead of the bright colors, big breasts, and easy-to-read type of many rock posters, Ryan works with a muted color palette, imagery that even a grandma could love, and exquisite hand lettering. It's a different approach, but one that sets Ryan's posters apart.

I spoke with Ryan in his home/studio/ practice space (he's also one of the two bassists in Chicago's Dianogah), after spending a solid two hours looking at the hundreds of posters Ryan has made. I, for one, wanted even more bunnies.

Interview by Daniel Sinker

#### So you went to school for painting.

Yeah. I started out in industrial design though. Actually, we'll have to back up even further. I grew up my whole life knowing I was going to be an architect. I applied to schools under architecture. The best situation for me ended up being the University of Illinois, but I couldn't get into architecture there because I wasn't a good enough student. I went into industrial design instead—which I hated, so I ended up in painting.

#### What did you hate about industrial design?

The faculty and the students.

#### But not the actual work itself?

I liked the idea, but all the day-to-day work of being involved in class with those people and those projects became a pain in the butt.

#### So then you moved to painting—do you do any painting anymore?

I did go through a burst of IOO little paintings right when I got out of school in '94. I had quit my job and was just painting for a while, before I invented posters! [laughs] But since then, I think I've done maybe one painting.

#### How did you come across doing poster art?

I was doing freelance illustration for Andy Mueller who runs the Ohio Girl company. He got a job to do a poster for a show down in Champaign and I did the illustration for it. We went to visit the screen printer, Screwball Press, who was going to make the poster, and to make a long, boring story short, I hit it off with Steve Walters there. I came back soon after to help around the shop, washing out screens and stuff like that. After designing a number of posters that Steve printed, I was

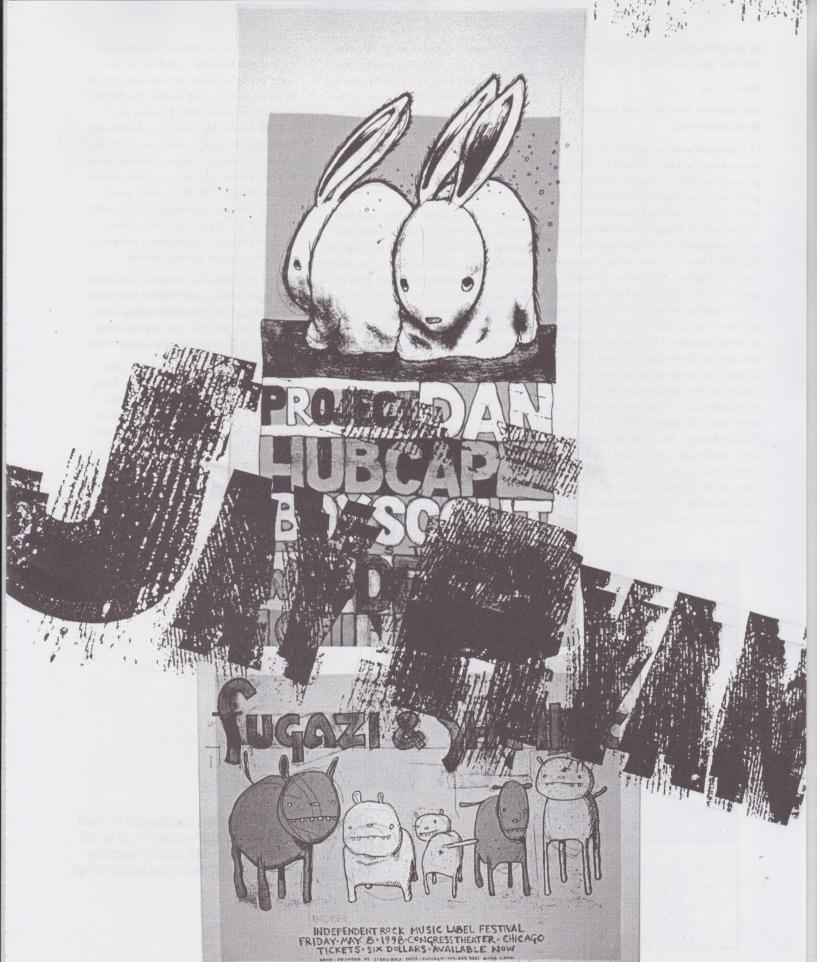
able to start printing my own work there.

## What about that process appealed to you? What made you think "This is something I could do for a while."

It seemed like it was process-oriented enough that it was interesting, but it wasn't such a labor that it was going to be boring. Also, there was something enjoyable about being around that shop when I was starting out. It was a bunch of people, and we shared a space with One Ton Press and Fireproof Press and there was pretty much somebody there around the clock. Everything about it was enjoyable: cooking in the summer and freezing in the winter and spending most of the day there coming up with these absurd and fun projects.

#### When did you decide to strike out on your own and start the Bird Machine?

Actually opening my own shop was out of Fireproof and Screwball losing the lease on that space. Fireproof downsized drastically into pretty much a skeleton crew and Screwball downsized to be able to be in the basement of Steve's house. A number of people that were involved moved out of town. It seemed like the right time to take the couple pieces of equipment that I had acquired over the years and take them back to my house. That's just the physical infrastructure. The business plan-if you want to laughingly call it that—was the same as I'd been doing it years before that. I had been operating basically by myself as far as buying my own materials and solely responsible for my own work since about mid-'96.



PUNK PLANET 79

So you graduated in '94, and then how long until you were doing screen work?

About a year and a half

How have you seen your work progress over the six years since?

In both good and bad ways, I think. I've gotten better at what I do and am more prepared to take on a more adventurous project-like an eight color poster and print 300 of them—and have a better idea of what they're going to look like earlier on. I was actually thinking about this recently: I hope I'm not falling into some kind of a rhythm. My posters generally have a "look" to them. As I get back into actively making posters this fall after laying off for a little bit here, I think I'm going to try to consider if I'm just following the standard of things that I've done before or if what I'm actively doing on each new project is what's appropriate for it. It'll be something that's interesting to see—I don't know what will happen. You and I just looked through almost all my posters there are a number of places where I'm really happy with the work that's been done, but other stacks of posters that aren't really worth showing to anybody at this point. But have I gotten better? I feel like I've

gotten better compositionally. Hopefully I've gotten more interesting with some of the type. I feel like the type is becoming more integrated with the design. Earlier on, I would lay on some really bad Quark text, and I still do that from time to time and I feel like it's a little bit better integrated, but about 90 percent of the posters have hand-drawn type instead of computer-generated.

I wanted to talk about the type work that you do. That, to me, is what makes your posters stand out. Your use of lettering, and how it's such an integral part to the imagery itself is pretty unique. There are some of your posters where it's almost hard to read what it's a poster for, which is sort of counter-intuitive for what is traditionally thought of as a promotional item.

I don't feel attracted to some of the poster work that is being done now, with bright colors and simple, cartoonish images that are traditionally sexist, like huge tittied women. Getting back to the text, I try to make some of it look more painterly than machine-generated. I drew a lot of inspiration type-wise from a German illustrator named Horst Janssen who died about six years ago. He had some really intriguing

text work on his posters that I've learned a lot from—or blatantly ripped off, in some cases. But he's a blind, old German guy, so he'll never see my stuff [laughs]. No, his stuff was really attractive stuff. ¶ Earlier on, I had a show with Art Chantry in Seattle and he saw this one poster, this June of 44/Rex poster that I like the image of but the text is terrible, and he told my friend who showed him the poster, "Oh, this is really good, but this computer type is auful." That really stuck with me [laughs]. After that, it was a long time before I did any more computer type. I really enjoy drawing the text.

How do you approach your pieces? A lot of the stuff, again, seems counterintuitive for a poster. How much are you consciously making a promotional item, and how much are you simply using this as an excuse to make a piece of art?

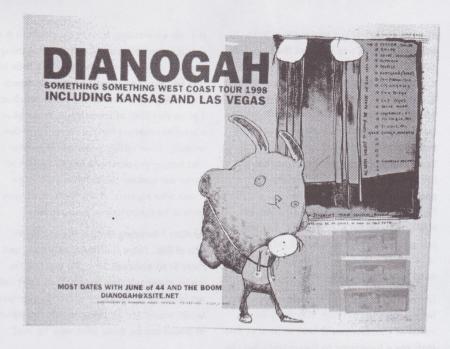
I think it's much more the latter than the former. When I was in school, I was doing these paintings and a lot of them would have a line of text across the bottom or on it somewhere, along with a cartoonish character of some type. It translated directly into poster work, though I had never really thought of that while I was in school. At this point, I don't really take into consideration how well this will advertise the product





At this point, I don't really take into consideration how well this will advertise the product that's attempting to be sold, as much as I worry about if this rabbit is doing something funny enough, or if it's clear that the dog has only three legs.





that's attempting to be sold, as much as I worry about if this rabbit is doing something funny enough, or if it's clear that the dog has only three legs. I feel like as long as what I'm making is an attractive piece that someone would want to look at and that all the information is on there—that it's an allages show or that doors open at 8:00 pmthen I feel like it's successful.

#### Have you ever given someone a poster and had them say, "Dag, I can't use this!"

I hope not. [laughs] It's probably happened, but aside from the horrible spelling mistake I made recently, I'm not aware of any blatant failures. I'm sure there are times when people are maybe not happy on first impression, and definitely there has been work that I've been less happy about, but generally I'm happy about the stuff and my posters have been cheap enough that I don't care if they like them or not. [laughs]

#### How do you arrive at the imagery you use?

I just keep drawing until something fits into place. If it's something I'm really stuck on, I'll have all the text worked out and I'll have this area that needs something to happen in it and I'll keep drawing until I get something. I'll usually have some kind of idea that I'll be aiming for, like it'll be a really interesting drawing of a dog doing a handstand on a birthday cake.

I'll just keep working on it and it won't be working and then I'll turn it over and it'll be something else entirely, and then it's like "Oh, this is obvious!" I don't know if I often set out with a specific goal, generally it's just sitting down and drawing within the subject matter feel that I think would be appropriate for the band.

Looking over the spread of your work, there's certainly repeating imagery throughout. There are a bunch of rabbits, some squirrels . . .

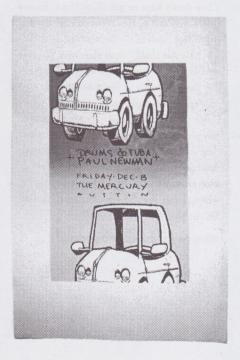
Squirrels are fun to draw!

#### Is it solely just that they're cute and fun to draw, or is there more to it than that?

I think I've just been on this kick for the last two years or so: this funny charicature of a small mammal. It's all the same animal, just different types of ears and tails. If it's got a round tail and long ears it's a rabbit, but if it's got short, pointy ears and a long tail, it's a cat; if it's the same thing as the cat but bigger, it's a dog. I don't know if there's any fascination with specifically rabbits or squirrels or cats, as much as it is that they're fun to draw and fun to put in funny situations. I think it's just kind of funny to put a beaver on a cat on a dog, with no sexual connotations whatsoever, or a giant rabbit strapped to a man's back. It doesn't necessarily translate to the printed word, but the imagery, I think, is funny.







In a way, I kind of see your work as kind of anti-poster art. It's so different than what traditional rock posters have become, and it's very different than what a poster is supposed to accomplish. I think your use of type plays into that, in that it's often not all that easy to read, another point I see playing into that is that you often have more abstracted imagery. Some of your pieces are very figurative, but then you'll also have pieces like the Ida poster or the recent one for the Fugazi/Shellac/The Ex shows. Or while you may have a figurative image, the way you've printed it, it's really subtle, and may not be as much of a focal point as, let's say, a Coop poster or something like that.

If you think back to the posters that were being done in the '60s, like the Filmore series of posters, you'd have to look at that stuff for a long time to figure out what the hell's going on. But yeah, I don't feel like the totally clear, comic book, black and white with bright colors is necessarily the most attractive thing to me. I have a little different color sense than some other people-it's more subtle, more muted. I think my posters present themselves as these pieces, these images; that it's OK for them to be brown and yellow and it doesn't have to be totally spelled out. You don't have to grab the attention of the people driving in a car down Broadway that are just glancing at Reckless Records. They don't have to get all of the information from the poster. It serves that purpose, but more in a subtle way, like "What the hell was that?" And then you go over and look at it and it says Lustre King at the Empty Bottle. I feel like there are a lot of ways that people can get information these days about shows. Thirty years ago, the poster was the only way to advertise that somebody was playing at the Filmore. At this point, I feel like there's more awareness of what's going on-people know when shows are. The poster serves a different purpose than it used to.

What do you think that purpose is?

It's still advertising, but my approach to it is that it's more to remind you that this thing is going on and maybe to give you a little bit of a feel for the aesthetic of what to expect from the particular bands. And as much as I guess this kind of trivializes it, it serves as a kind of souvenir for the event. I like that, actually. I like selling posters at the shows and having people that made the effort to come out and see the band be able to go home with a poster. But I don't think they have to be billboards to be successful.

Another interesting thing is the commerce end of this. There is a commodity here, and there is an audience for it. Do you feel like you're making posters because you can't sell art as easily as you can posters? In a perfect world, would you be doing posters for bands, or would you be doing print work for you?

Music is a main interest for me. Music and art hold equal positions in my mind. You just looked through 150 posters in the course of an hour or two, and there weren't too many in there that were just printed images not about the text on them. The attraction for me is to have something to do with these musical events and bands I like associating my drawing work with. I don't like that posters become a commodity, where this thing for a band will sell on Ebay for 50 bucks. But at the same time, I sit here and stay up all night for a week working on something, putting a lot of time and money into it. I don't make my living making posters—I did for a while, but I don't now. I do posters because I enjoy them, but at the same time I do put a lot of time and money into them. I definitely enjoy being able to get paid for that time and money, there's really nothing to complain about that, but it's not a way to get rich at all. It's a nice combination, because it's something that I really enjoy. It's something that's rewarding on a variety of levels. You've got a physical object there to look at. I can give them to people, friends, and have them enjoy them, I can sell them to other people. I can give them to bands. I feel like in the grand scheme of things, buying a poster for five bucks at a show—something that there are only 300 existing of, or less, in the world—is a pretty good deal.

#### Do you see yourself doing this forever?

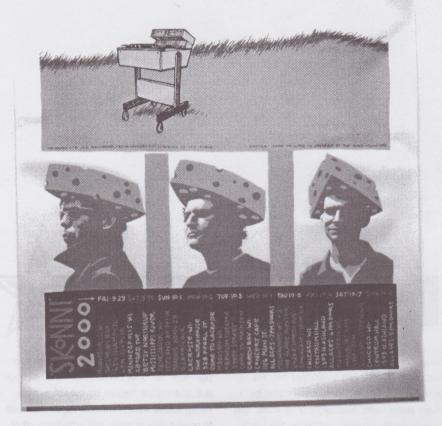
At this point, it's been a pretty slow year for poster making due to all the different things that are going on. I've been married for less than a year, I've started a new full-time job, having my wife be in grad school, rehabbing the house, being in the band and touring and making a new record. I think as a number of those things become resolved and get crossed off the list, I can see the poster making taking prominence again in my time allotment. It's something that I definitely enjoy doing and I can see doing for the rest of my life. I'm not sure exactly how it's going to evolve. I'm sure it's going to be different when I'm 39 as opposed to 29. When I'm 59, I'm probably not going to be making posters for punk bands at the Fireside Bowl, but you never know-Art Chantry is, and he's in his 40s. When I started out, I don't know that I thought that I would or would not be doing this six years later. I was doing a lot of different things all at the same time, but this ended the thing that more often than not, when I woke up and thought what I had to do that day, it was work on posters. Eventually, it became the only that I do when I wake up in the morning. I don't see any reason to have to stop.

#### Do you ever think about the buildings you didn't build?

Yes, and I'm glad I let someone else build them. [laughs] Getting out of school, my jobs were apprentice carpenter, house-painter, model builder for an architectural model, freelance illustrator, booking bands at the Empty Bottle, shipping guy at the warehouse at Touch and Go, PA on video and commercial shoots, I had an antique restoration and a custom furniture building job for a few months. These things overlapped, and eventually just became postermaking, and I'm real happy about that. 

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## SHELLAC HIGH-DEPENDENCY-UNIT







My approach to it is that it's more to remind you that this thing is going on and maybe to give you a little bit of a feel for the aesthetic of what to expect from the particular bands

# shepard fairey



ndre the Giant Has a Posse" stickers started appearing everywhere—and anywhere—over 10 years ago. They were pasted onto poles, street signs, gym lockers, notebooks, foreheads-you name itseemingly overnight. The stickers (which eventually morphed into the fascist-tinged "Obey/Giant" posters and stickers) became a part of the everyday visual noise of the American landscape. Anyone who is in tune with their surroundings has seen them, yet no one seemed to know what they meant, or where they came from-only that they were "subversive," and that they surely meant, well, something. Or did they? Surely, they had some kind of purpose; some kind of intentions, dubious or otherwise: a product to sell, or a band to promote, or a platform to stand upon. There's rarely ever such clever marketing for absolutely no purpose at all, now is there?

Soon enough, the Obey Giant image appeared on sweatshirts and T-shirts for sale at Urban Outfitters and other trendy shops. Was the intention all along to use the now-familiar Andre image as simple merchandising fodder? And what about when the artist and

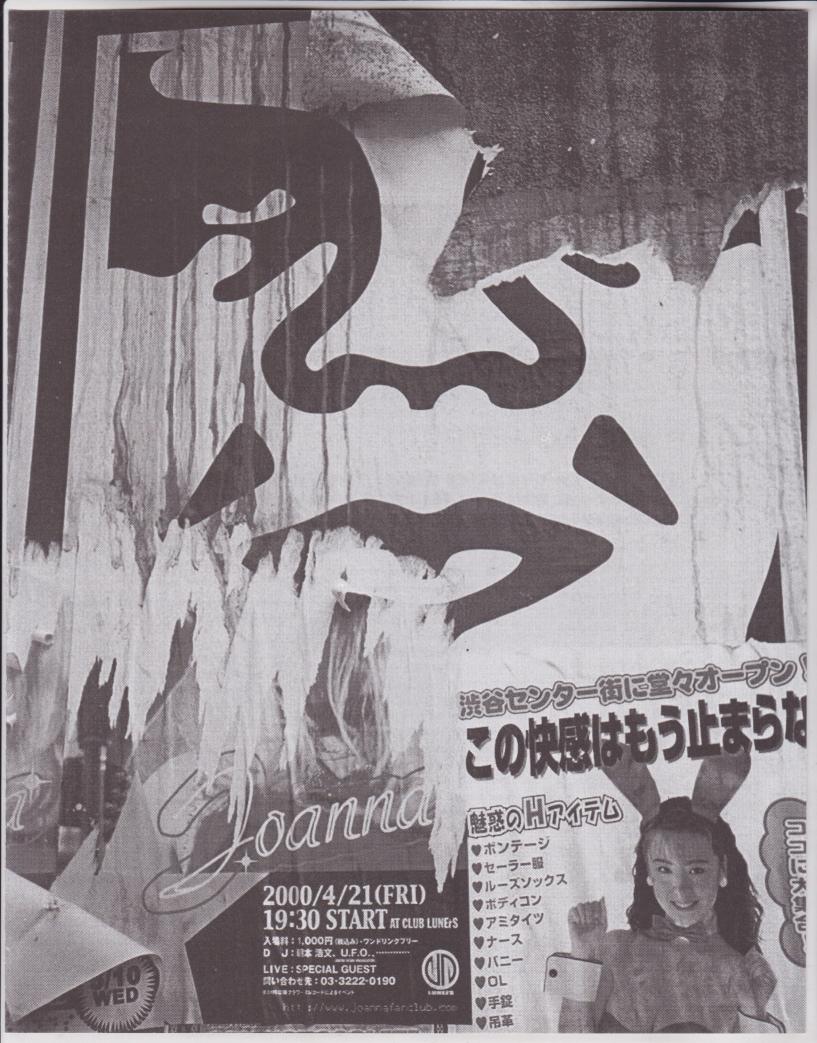
creator of this virtual Andre—the image became simplified and abstracted over the years—found himself being sought after by major publications and media of all kinds, and subsequently, corporate customers like Levi's, Virgin and PepsiCo? Was Andre just a launching block for that too?

So who was the artist, and what the hell is the Giant thing really all about anyway? Is this guy a punk rock activist, with a fiercely independent and antagonistic agenda, bent on subverting consumer culture by disseminating his own ideological propaganda? An insidious cult leader suckering America's skater culture? A slick opportunist who cleverly launched a million dollar company through a savvy (if accidental) street-team scheme that duped hordes of hapless miscreants, activists and graff bombers alike? Somewhere within the nebulous subtext of all of these rather ridiculous descriptions perhaps lies the true-to-life, dynamic, living and breathing man called Shepard Fairey.

Please read this interview and draw your own conclusions about Shepard Fairey. Fairey, whose impact and presence on the contemporary art and design landscape are undeniable.

Fairey, whose wit and charm are on high supply-reflected guite obviously in his artistic output, and audible through his speech as well. Fairey, whose rapid fire and in-depth responses to queries rolls as easily and articulately off of his tongue as a Jason Lee character in a Kevin Smith movie. Fairey, who adroitly and effortlessly answers every question presented to him as though he's thought about it a thousand times before, who willingly embraces seemingly every contradiction within the tricky, flimsy bricks comprising the dam that delicately holds back the waters between art and commerce. Fairey, whose mere appropriation of a silly wrestling icon has captivated and motivated thousands, perhaps millions, to join in the merriment of creating subtle visual havoc from Circle K's to hardcore shows. Fairey, who lives, eats, and breaths his work and sleeps easily every night knowing what he has, and continues to accomplish with his ever-lessening time. Draw your own conclusions from the information presented here, because Shepard wouldn't have it any other way.

Interview by Ryan J. Downey



#### Tell me about yourself as a child. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, which is where they started the Civil War. It's not a bad place—it's really beautiful it's just small and kind of conservative. There really wasn't too much exciting that was going on in my life until I started skateboarding right before I turned 14. I hadn't wanted to start skating because it was real trendy and I was really anti-anything trendy. But a friend of mine left his board over at my house, I tried it, and I liked it a lot. So I decided to get my own board. ¶ When I went to the shop to get my board, they were playing Agent Orange. I don't know whether it was just the association with skateboarding or what, but it gave me the arm-hairs-stand-up, adrenaline rush feeling. That was the start of something. I started skating and moved on to the Sex Pistols, the Dead Kennedys, and the Circle Jerks. ¶ Skateboarding and punk rock were the things that I started to define myself

stuff. The first stencil I ever made, was a Thrasher stencil I made with a kitchen knife. I ended up cutting up the Thrasher cover even though I had tried to do it so that I wouldn't mess up the cover! [Laughs] Maybe I've gotten a little smarter since then. The next one was a portrait of Sid Vicious with the lock. ¶ I would make T-shirts and spray that stuff on my board or whatever. I'd make one T-shirt at first and people would see it and they would be like, "Oh man, where'd you get that T-shirt?" I'd say, " I made it." The next time around, I did a Misfits skull and I made three. I'd sell two of 'em and I'd be like, "All right cool, that covered my costs." ¶ My mom had a copier, which was like a blessing-nobody's mom had a copier! I could Xerox any album cover and then cut a stencil from it. It also started training me in the reductive principles of art that I use now. I try to make images as simple as possible and print 'em in two or three colors. I would do that back then, too..

#### How did you end up at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)?

By my senior year of high school, my parents were like, "You're stagnating here in public school." They just weren't gonna let me stay there. I ended up at the North Carolina School of the Arts, but then I got kicked out for skateboarding on the property and spending the night out without permission. I had to scramble to find a new school and ended up in this little art school in California called the Idlewild School of Music and the Arts. You did your academic classes in the morning and your art classes all afternoon until 4:30. I started to learn about photography and graphic design. I realized that what I had been doing with the simplification of these images was graphic design. ¶ From there, I developed a fairly decent portfolio. My parents didn't want me to go to art school, but they said, "If you're going to go to art school, you're going to have to apply to Rhode Island School of Design." So I did and I got in! I



# [The sticker] just started to proliferate around Providence and people started to want to know what it was. The more people wanted to know what it was—I was keeping a real low profile—the more I wanted to put it out there.

by, much to my father's dismay. My dad's a doctor and he's really conservative—he was captain of the football team. He wanted me to be more that style—an all-American jock. He had a nurse whose son was into punk rock and skating and he was a total, total fuck-up. My dad just thought that would be the path I would follow, so, I always said that whatever I was listening to, "it's not punk Dad, this is new wave!" [Laughs]

## Were you always interested in art—were you the type of kid who read comic books or drew pictures?

I always drew since I was a little kid, but I never really thought much about what I would do with it or anything. I usually drew stuff from photographs or from life. I measured my success by how well I could replicate a photo or draw a still life. ¶ Then when I started to get into skateboarding and punk, there was a lot of Xerography and stencils—high-contrast

How did you do in your high school art classes?

Oh man, I think I got B's and C's. I never wanted to do the assignments that the teacher wanted me to do. I was actually taking some art classes after school from one of my old teachers from when I went to private school. I hated the art teacher in public school. I did really well in art classes when I was in private school—that was the only thing I always did well in. The teacher in public school was awful. She hoarded all of these supplies! It was bizarre! In the backroom, collecting dust, were screens, ink, and all these pens. ¶ One day I asked if I could go to the back room because my pen was running out. So I go back there and see this screen and it was like, "No way! A silkscreen!" I had been doing all of my stuff just by doing it with spray paint and it was messy and really labor-intensive. I sorta understood the principles of screen printing, but I had never done it. I ended up making T-shirts in class.

remember we went and checked it out and there were some decent skate spots, so I was like, "All right, this is cool, I'll go!"

#### So when did you create the "Andre the Giant Has A Posse" artwork?

My freshman year at RISD I was still making a lot of bootleg punk shirts and skate shirts, mostly re-working stuff from Dead Kennedys fold-outs that Winston Smith had done [laughs]. I hadn't really done anything that was a reproducible sticker of my own. It was always just stuff that I was into. While I was working at this skate shop, I started doing stickers for the shop. I could kinda do whatever I wanted. ¶ One day I was at my house making a bootleg Clash Tshirt to sell at the shop. My boss never came in the shop, except on Saturdays. I could sell my bootleg shirts and undercut the shop all week long and just take the stuff home with me on Friday night. He'd never even know! Anyway, I was looking through the newspaper because my friend

that was over wanted to see how to make a paper-cut stencil. So I was looking through the newspaper for something for him to practice on and just came across this ad for wrestling. Andre the Giant was the central piece of the ad. I was like, "Oh my God! Look at this guy he's so ugly and big! He probably had a horrible childhood, but I bet he's getting rich now!" That irony of taking misfortune and turning it into fortune was analogous to what I decided would be the use of the sticker. I was like, "Eric! Look at this thing! We gotta use this thing! ¶ "Posse" came because we were all listening to NWA and Ice-T and it was like, "Yo, my crew, my posse, we're rolling out." Back then, it was still sorta taboo to appropriate from rap culture. We were self-aware that taking "posse" was sorta goofy, sorta offensive, but we didn't take ourselves seriously at all. Everyone's so numb to that kind of appropriation now that it's really hard to put it in perspective, but that was actually fairly cutting edge.

People can be ironic about it now in a way that's pretty crass. Whereas I'm sure you guys actually liked those records.

Oh yeah, completely! I loved 'em! Public Enemy was what made me want to read about Malcolm X and Huey Newton and all that stuff. As much as I felt like maybe the cracker fronting on the culture, I also felt like learning about it and expanding my understanding of diversity in the world. ¶ Anyway, Eric was like, "That's stupid! I don't want to do anything with that!" I was trying to make him do it because he didn't want to do it. Wrestling really wasn't cool with skateboarders back then. He was trying to cut it with an X-acto knife and was totally botching it, so I was like, "Gimme that!" I finished it. ¶ That's why the original "Andre the Giant Has a Posse" sticker looks so grainy and sketchy and everything. It's the mixture of a bad Xerox machine with a bad X-acto knife cutting job and my bad handwriting. But somehow, all of those really bad elements thrown together had some sort of graphic soundness and charm that people reacted to. ¶ We put stickers around on stop signs and at the skate spots and in the clubs and stuff in Providence. It just started to proliferate around Providence and people started to want to know what it

was. The more people wanted to know what it was—I was keeping a real low profile—the more I wanted to put it out there. I thought it was so funny, how it got to people when they saw it around a lot.

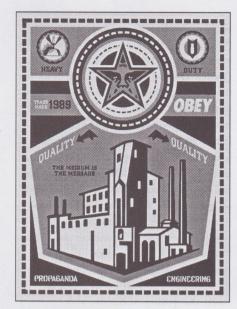
Especially people in the scene that want to feel like they got the answer to everything. [laughs] It was really getting under those people's skin. 'Cause they knew that it had some sort of counter-cultural, sub-culture thing behind it. But they didn't know what it was! I got really fascinated by the way people were interpreting it, because it was a reflection of their personality.

Your website's manifesto says that there's really no purpose to the Andre artwork, rather, the purpose is to elicit a response from people who see it, for them to draw their own conclusions as to what it might be.

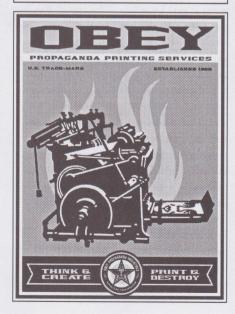
Exactly. You get so numb to everything in your environment being there for a reason. Whether it's a benevolent reason or a sinister reason, there's always a reason that's pretty easy to explain. Only in recent years have companies started doing teaser campaigns, where they put something out there that doesn't lead you directly to a product. But back then, the idea of something out there that wasn't a product, didn't have an explanation, and didn't even have anything to do with what it seemed to be aboutwrestling-was pretty unheard of. ¶ I use the term "the medium is the message," taken from Marshall McLuhan. It's good for the Andre thing because the way in which it was perpetuated, people thought, "OK, it's being perpetuated by someone who is motivated . . . it's sort of underground . . . I don't know whether it's one person or a group of people . . . but it seems like it's important." I was really fascinated by people trying to figure out the significance of it when there was no significance. It actually started to put other stuff in the environment in perspective. The only way you could think of the Andre stuff was in relation to stuff that surrounded it. In the very beginning I was sort of just fantasizing. I had no idea what it was going to actually become.

#### What year was this when you first started?

Summer of '89. I was just making paper stickers and then in 1990 I started making vinyl stickers. But it really took on







another level when this guy was running for mayor-I think he is still mayor, if he hasn't been kicked out of office-Buddy Cianci. He was running for mayor and there was a billboard right at the bottom of the hill at RISD. It said, "Cianci: he never stopped caring about Providence." It had all of this white negative space with Cianci standing there, waving-he looked really teeny, like maybe eight feet tall on a 20-foot billboard. ¶ I had this assignment for an illustration class that was to illustrate a fortune cookie message. I got this fortune cookie that said, "To affect the quality of the day is no small achievement." I knew I wanted to do something to that billboard-I'll affect the quality of the day with humor!" So I went and I measured Cianci's head. It was three feet high, so I made an Andre head to match. I had a three-foot high head and I went and I put it up there. It was really easy. ¶ That was on a Monday and my class was on a Friday. Well, they cleaned that billboard

original sticker. And I put the eight-foot head over his face. I had a friend across the street looking out telling me as I unrolled the head if it was crooked or not. They didn't have the huge blueprint copiers yet, so I had to tile 64 IIx17 photo copies-that took a while! ¶ The next day, it spread through the school so fast-half the school was standing down at the bottom of the block just looking at it! It was on the radio, on the news. After that happened, I thought, "Yeah, people will notice it" but I never realized it was going to be as crazy as it was. There was a total media circus around it for a week! ¶ The police started conducting an investigation. They figured it might be a RISD student. The RISD people started investigating. They talked to a bunch of people. Some people gave it up that they thought it might be me. They started following me around. Eventually they brought me into the security office. I came out of the dining hall one day and everybody had left all of billboard was a perfect target. He didn't press charges though. He issued a press release that said, "You know, I've got a sense of humor. This is a kid who's in college, I don't want to interrupt his education. I'm just gonna get him to do an art project for the community to put his talents to more 'constructive' use." He actually never followed up on that, because he had served his purpose with the press release. He didn't even care.

Obviously it's taken on an even larger presence than that in the years since. I read an article on *Salon* that argued that you're trying to elevate Andre the Giant to the same kind of iconic status as a James Dean or a Marilyn Monroe. Is that true? That seems different than what you're saying.

No, I think the guy who wrote that article misinterpreted some stuff that I said. It's supposed to be the ironic, evil antithesis of those things. Andre is really ugly, he's a mutant. He comes from bottom of the barrel, white trash culture. It totally sur-



# A lot of people had been asking people like, "What's up with this Andre the Giant thing? Is it a cult?" I just thought, "You know, this thing is totally humorous, how could they think it's a cult? But if they want cult, I'll give 'em cult!"

and fixed it and they made Cianci three times as big! He was so big that they had to build an extension for his waving hand coming off the top of the billboard. I hadn't even had time to document it yet! I was like, "Aw, man! I'm not gonna be thwarted like! I ain't going out like that!" Somebody from the newspaper had gotten a photo of it and it ran in the paper the next day: "Cianci billboard vandalized." It sounded really sinister and I thought it was awesome. ¶ I went back and I measured the new one, and the new head was eight and a half feet high! I had to go to the top of the billboard and I went up there with a backpack, rollers, Elmer's glue, water, pans, and everything. Where it said Cianci never stopped caring about Providence, I changed it to "Andre never stopped caring about Providence." I put a sign in his hand that said, "Join the posse," using the same type from the

their stuff in the hallway and my portfolio that I had some stickers in was just gone! They were like, "Yeah, come into the security office." They had every single security dude, the head guy, all of the other administration guys. And there was my portfolio in the back. Immediately, they go, "You have any idea why we called you down here?" And I said, "Yeah, probably about the Cianci billboard that I did." And they were just so let down that they didn't get to make me "crack" under the "pressure." [Laughs] ¶ I had to go to Cianci's house and apologize. He had been in office before and had been removed from office for having these cops hold down his ex-wife's lover while he hit him with a log. He had a reputation as a brute, which was why a lot of people thought I had done the billboard. But I actually didn't have much knowledge of his political background—just graphically the

prises me that wrestling is as popular now as it is, because 10, 12 years ago, no one took wrestling seriously besides rednecks. What I've done is piggyback Andre onto those more classic icons like that in a way that made it seem like it could be taken just as seriously and on the same level. Like to put Andre in a Jimi Hendrix poster with the same afro and the same psychedelic typography. The funny thing is that, no Jimi Hendrix fans wrote me and said they were insulted—only wrestling fans did! [Laughs]

Wouldn't you say that by doing that kind of reappropriation that inadvertently, or not, you have robbed Andre of Andre the *person*?

Oh completely! I'm totally robbing Andre of anything as a person. One of my goals is to make Andre more important in my use of him than he was in real life. They just updated the A&E Biography on Andre the Giant. In the newest one, there's an addendum at the end where the host comes

out and he talks about my sticker. That blows me away. That totally blows me away.

Have you encountered any legal entanglements from appropriating Andre's name and image? Does his family or estate receive any compensation from your work?

Well, when I first started my website back in '97, I said to myself, "If somebody has seen my stickers around and wants to find out more information, what's the thing they're going to type in?" Andre the Giant. I did a web search, and even though there were like 50 unauthorized, unofficial Andre sites, no one had AndreTheGiant.com. So, I snagged it! I made my site and immediately I was getting a lot of hate mail from all of the wrestling fans that were typing in his name. People saying, "What you're doing is blasphemous!" "Andre was one of the greatest athletes that ever lived!" "What you are doing has nothing to do with the superhero, awesome man Andre the Giant!" I just sent back some e-mails that said "Hey, news flash: Wrestling is fake and there's no tooth fairy, OK?" I have no malicious feelings towards Andre at all. This is just a different thing. ¶ I guess one of those people that either was alerted to or stumbled onto my site was Andre's estate. They sent me an e-mail saying, "You're selling posters and stuff on your website. We don't know how much you're making, but the name 'Andre the Giant' is a trademarked name, you can't use that name." They wanted to know how much in sales I had done. I had done like \$5000 in sales on my website-hardly anything compared to what they would care about. So I said, "I'm sorry, I'll change the name, and I'm not going to sell anything that's close to his likeness or uses his name." ¶ That's one of the reasons that I made the transition from the old sticker, the grainy one. I don't sell posters of it and I don't sell Tshirts of it. I still give the old stickers away though. I started using a more simplified face, more like a Big Brother, Orwell-style icon. The other reason I made the transition was that a lot of people had been asking people like, "What's up with this Andre the Giant thing? Is it a cult?" I just thought, "You know, this thing is totally humorous, how could they think it's a cult? But if they want cult, I'll give 'em

cult!" I decided there were two ways you could go to get people to pay attention to it, besides using just the sticker. There was using other variations that use other culturally icons for a positive association or a negative association. Because whenever there's a positive association with one group of people, there's always a negative association from the people that hate those people. So, I thought, "If all these conservative, annoying sort of people are getting bummed out about the stickers, I'll give 'em something to be bummed out about." So, that's when I came up with the icon face and "OBEY." [Laughs] And I started using that all of the time, and using all of this communist imagery, and all of this stuff. Because, to me it was like, "OK, you're totally paranoid of all of this socialist propaganda and all of this communist propaganda that has a stereotypical look to it. Yet you're completely manipulated by patriotic, nationalist US propaganda-by McDonald's, by Marlboro-things that use the same devices and slogans but it's just more culturally familiar and warm to you, as opposed to scaring you." I really wanted to point out that it was ridiculous and there was a lot of hypocrisy in the way that people were reacting to my stuff.

#### Getting back to Andre the Giant's estate—you aren't worried that they may come after you?

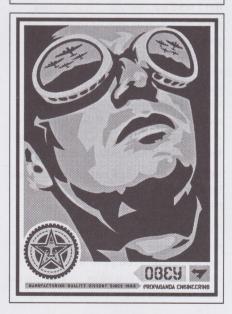
I just don't think that they feel like they have a leg to stand on legally or that there's enough money being made to warrant coming after me. We have insurance and stuff for the clothing line in case anything like that happens. I've had tons of law students over the years send me papers defending my position on why it would be OK for me to do it. One of them used the "It's been changed 30 percent" argument, another one used the 2 Live Crew case about using "Pretty Woman" for the sake of parody. It's expensive to retain a lawyer to go after somebody for this kind of thing and those guys probably just don't think that the risk would be worth the potential rewards.

#### But you don't feel any kind of personal obligation?

You know, I don't. Andre's got an illegitimate daughter that lives in Seattle. If she came to me and talked to me about it, I'd







probably just explain why I don't think that the sales of the stuff that I make are based on people being fans of Andre the Giant. If she continued to argue with me, I'd probably make some sort of obligatory concession, like, "You know, I've made all of these prints over the years and they're accruing value, let me give you one of every print I've done." But I definitely would not say, "Oh sure, let me give you some royalties." Most of the things that I do are licensing agreements anyway and I make a pittance off of it-I make a really small percentage. By the time it gets to me, every little person along the way has taken a small chunk and before you know it, it's all gone! That's not the reason I do it. I don't do it to make money. I do it to get the concept out there further.

But I've seen some sweatshirts and other merchandise of yours at Urban Outfitters . . .

Right, and that's like the biggest place that carries my stuff. And whatever, not all of their stuff is great and I don't agree with posters on the sides of buildings, stickers. They see that it's implemented rebelliously and they want to know what it's about. And they want to be part of it because it doesn't seem like it's the establishment—it's not their parents.

But it's also not some "street team" marketing concept.

When I was younger, I made the Dead Kennedys logo, or the Misfits skull, or the Independent Trucks logo on a shirt because I wanted to wear my symbols of rebellion literally on me and have people see them. The Andre thing is like that for people now. If somebody has a sticker on their skateboard or on their guitar or on their notebook, other kids see them and ask about it. It's a way to bond. And they may not have come up with their own idea, their own thing, their own worldview or their own zine, but they've got this template there that they can embrace and implement. And a lot of times they learn from that template how to apply all of that

his own thing

As an outgrowth of the success of Andre, you've started a graphic design company, Blk/Mrkt which has created corporate work for the likes of Pepsi, Netscape, Virgin Records and Levi's. Don't you find it interesting that you've gone from putting up stickers to maneuvering through such shark infested waters?

Yeah. I've gotten a lot of flak from that, too. People say, "You've developed the trust of a group of people that don't believe in what those big corporations are doing and by you doing stuff for them we feel betrayed or that you're leading people because people trust your graphic style and anything associated with it. That's a bad move."

So is your art a totally separate thing from your work? How exactly do you go about separating the two?

This is the way I look at it: What I'm doing with the Giant stuff is saying, "take everything with a grain of salt, don't be a sucker!" Be a discriminating consumer;



# All advertising is, to an extent, manipulative. Don't let yourself be manipulated if you don't wanna be! That's what I'm trying to say with my work. But I also have to make a living. I don't have a trust fund.

everything that they're into but a lot of people don't have any way to get stuff besides Urban Outfitters. ¶ The reason I make product is because I've gotta finance all of this stuff. It's expensive for me to do! I send out thousands of free stickers every month, hundreds of stencils, free posters, tons of stuff. It's expensive to make. And I've got people that work for me that handle sending all of that stuff out, as well as the mailorder. It's expensive. And you know, me, going to different cities and hijacking these billboards and doing these huge installations, those big posters are very, very expensive.

Going back to the "cult" aspect, what do you think attracts kids to want to be a part of "the posse?"

That goes back to the "medium is the message" thing. What attracts them is the way it's applied. You go to New York, you see stencils of it. You go to LA and you see billboards that have been hijacked, huge

stuff to their own thing. I don't really want a bunch of clones. I just want people to learn from what I'm doing. There always are going to be the clone people that don't "get it" and I try not to be judgmental about that because I don't feel like I should tell people what it should be or what it should not be about. But the best thing that can happen is if while they're doing it and they're thinking about it they have some sort of epiphany on their own. ¶ To a minimal degree, on my website, I say, "Please don't put the stuff on private property that's in use, please don't go over other people's art." Stuff to me that should be really obvious, but some people don't figure it out. As much as I can, I have kind of a laissez faire attitude about it. People say to me, "This kid took your sticker and he combined it with this and now he's using it for his band, aren't you mad?" I'm like, "No! He's doing his own thing!" That's better than him not doing

analyze what you're buying into. Doing stuff for Mountain Dew should, in my opinion, reinforce that. Cause it's like, "Haha, I'm doing something for this company that they think is going to make them sell more stuff, but it's coming from an artist who discourages conspicuous consumption!" The other side of it is, those companies have graphic design firms lined up for miles. If I boycott them, it doesn't make a difference. Somebody's gonna do their stuff, they're gonna sell the same amount of product, probably. Whereas, if I take the money I make from them and I put it into my thing, I can get so much mileage out of so little money relatively speaking. I feel like it's so much more worth it to just take from them and put into my thing for the what the world stands to gain-if I can be conceited enough to say that the world has anything to gain. ¶ It would just be stupid for me to try to boycott those people-people would never know the difference. By doing the

stuff that I do, through interviews and through my website, have a forum to even discuss that stuff! Just because I do graphics for a company doesn't mean I endorse everything that they're about. The other thing is, I don't do anything for anyone that I really think is doing something bad to the public. Like smoking, for example—I don't want to do anything for cigarette companies because I don't want to encourage smoking.

But there is a larger argument here. Take Levi's. Levi's laid off 30 percent of its US workforce in the last couple years and moved manufacturing overseas. Or take Pepsi's onetime illicit involvement with Burma. Do you feel a responsibility as far as those larger connections?

No. I don't want to do stuff for Nike. because I know that they have a really bad history with sweatshops. A lot of the stuff I'm just not aware of and if somebody brings my attention to it, I might change my mind. As far as Levi's go, I didn't know anything about Levi's doing any bad stuff. The people I work with at Levi's really love art and are incredibly supportive. They just gave a big sponsorship package to Blk/Mrkt for an art show we did in San Francisco. That money enabled us to get the word out about the art show and a lot of people came out and were exposed to something good. So you have to kind of weigh the plusses and minuses.

Despite all of this, you still take on pretty underground projects—the latest Brother's Keeper album, for example

I do that because I've always, always sympathized with the underdog. I still do. Those are the people who I'm pulling for. Doing Jello Biafra's No WTO Combo record, I got paid \$500 bucks-normally we get like five grand for an album package. But money's not important to me. As long as I have enough money to survive and continue doing the things I want to do, the money's not important to me. It's great to make money, because money's freedomyou don't have to do what anybody else tells you when you have money. But I'm not greedy. I don't live a frivilous life. ¶ People say, "you've got all of this stuff going, if you stopped doing all of that, you'd do fine." I wouldn't do fine-I'd just

break even on the Obey Giant stuff. I've got \$7000 a month in overhead on the Obey Giant stuff between the stickers, the posters and the employees that I have. All of the postage. All of the stuff that goes out free. People are on crack! People that don't know anything about business, they think I'm getting "paid," they're so wrong.

But take the Brother's Keeper album as an example. That band is quite political and savagely attacks mass-marketed consumerism, but on the other hand you're doing mass marketing for big companies.

Yeah. And like I said before, the irony of that is that I actually want people to be more critical, more analytical. I want people to approach everything with a critical eye. All advertising is, to an extent, manipulative. Don't let yourself be manipulated if you don't wanna be! That's what I'm trying to say with my work. But I also have to make a living. I don't have a trust fund. In exploring "anti" I've gotten so good at doing it, that people want me to be "pro." At the same time I don't think all of the companies are good, but I don't think they're all bad, either. What I always say is that it's a supply and demand relationship. If people demanded that companies not treat them like idiots with their advertising, they wouldn't. That's proven throughout history. I just don't think that the way society in America is set up that conditions are going to get so bad that it's gonna warrant some sort of revolution. So what I'm doing is, rather than taking abrasive, confrontational, revolutionary tactics and trying to force people to be down with it when they don't want that. What I'm trying to do is gradually have this sort of osmosis. Saying, "Look at this thing that I'm doing, how far it's gotten and how stupid it is and how crazy and ridiculous is that?" When people say, "I'm not going to be suckered by your thing!" I just write 'em an e-mail back saying, "Right on man! There are probably worse enemies to have, but at least you saw that this was kind of ridiculous. Now take that same logic and apply it to everything else!"

#### Don't believe the hype.

Exactly! When people say "this thing that you're doing, it's so brilliant." I always go, "Don't believe the hype!"









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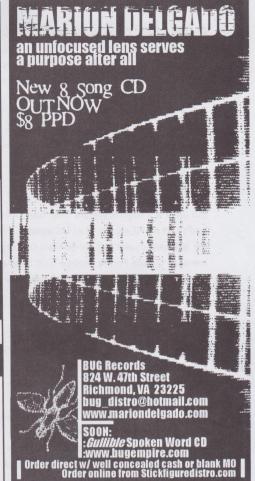
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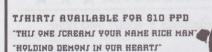
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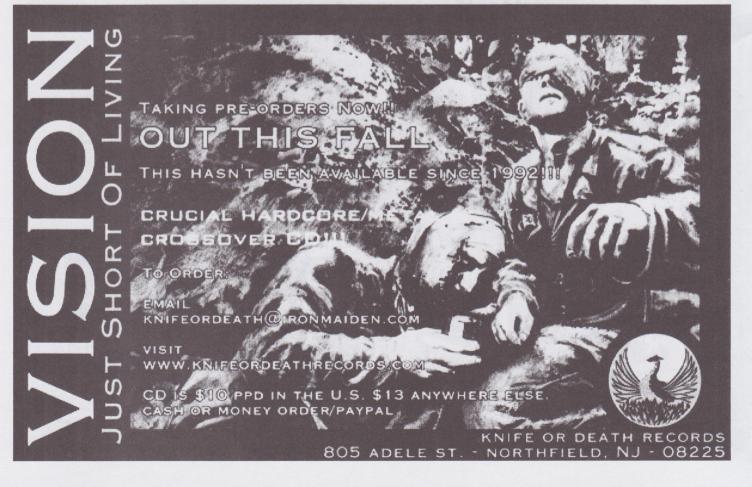
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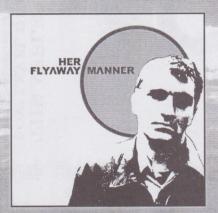


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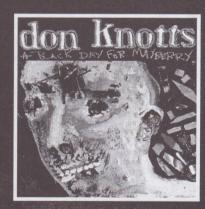


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# drawing a Difference of the Margins of the Margins

aybe it's hard to picture now, in a visual environment clogged with gag-me-with-a-press-pack vanity shots and still-life-with-college-boy album covers, but punk used to be something to look at. That first lurid wave of noise that rippled through a thousand stagnant psyches agitated pencils and pens just as often as power chords. It startled into frenzied activity a generation of artists attracted to a make-your-own rules movement that hadn't yet calcified into the purely musical. Maybe punk art didn't have a counterpart to the Ramones or the Sex Pistols right at the beginning, but it'd catch up. And of course there were going to be comics-it fit so well. The slavering fuckfests of the hippie underground press introduced method to misfit madness not too many years before—it wasn't pretty, but at least it wasn't all-American men in tights-and established the archetype for an ugly new form of unfunnies. Punk was already a cartoon-all you had to do was put safety pin to paper.

Gary Panter's malformed untermensch Jimbo blundered through the same pseudoapocalyptic milieu as real-life LA locals (meet you at the Atomic Cafe, right?). Los Bros. Hernandez translated their own life experiences into the masterpiece Love and Rockets. And how many geniuses toiled in graphic obscurity? Only the collector scum know for sure. Some of it got saved, in collections that sound just as edgy as they read: Raw. Weirdo. Hate. World War Three Illustrated. It wasn't all mohawks and moshing—does everything have to be that unsubtle—but there was an unmistakable con-

nection to the same vital forces that hummed through the music (and there's \$80 books of badly xeroxed relics that'll tell you the same thing, if you can afford to buy them).

But when the bottom dropped out of the mainstream comics industry in the mid-'90s (post the Superman-dying debacle and post a frenzy of fanboys deciding they could make big bucks speculating on the spandex set—sort of a pimply precursor to the tech crashes echoing today), it took the little presses with it. With the hippie-head-shop network long-gone, the number of comic shops in the country down to 2,000 (a fifth of what it used to be, and with anything that wasn't glossy and vapid crammed into a dusty long box somewhere, if that), and even star-power artists like Dan Clowes and Adrian Tomine selling in the low 10,000s, dirtball DIY kids had their backs up against the xerox machine.

But they're still out there—hidden in zine distros, bundled in with boxes of 7"s or mixed in with the flyers at the record store, maybe (don't ask about comic distro; it's a tough game to play). In 20 more years, these artists below are the ones whose collected works you'll be reading—right now, they're the shut-ins staying home with a stack of sketch pads, a pack of uniball pens, and a can't-help-it compulsion to get it all down on paper. It's not just for the sake of cheap laughs—it's documentary, it's fiction, it's art, it's the world the music plays soundtrack to, and it's a small but stubborn part of DIY culture where a picture is worth a thousand shitty perzines.





#### JANELLE: "I don't mind making a public ass out of myself."

So she chased a chairful of rats into the streets of Berkeley with a lead pipe. So she went to the cheese factory on a date, until the boy chickened out. So she got hepatitis (you know, the kind you get from eating shit) and turned yellow for a little bit. Why the fuck should she be embarrassed about any of it? For 10 years, Janelle (the one they write all the songs about) has turned a life fit to burst with rock 'n' roll misadventure into proudly debauched warts-and-all comics—and she doesn't leave any of the scandalous stuff out.

"About 99 percent of it has been true to life," she says from a pay phone at a gas station in Titusville, FL, waiting for Fleshies to load their tour van (don't worry, it'll probably all show up in some comic someday). "I don't mind making a public ass out of myself—I think it builds character."

And of course she's basically spontaneously combusting with character: Janelle's Desperate Times and antecedent Tales of Blarg are a love-at-first-sight car wreck of hopeless romanticism, cheerful self-deprecation and teeth-gnashing sarcasm, alive with such unadulterated personality that you wanna get up, get drunk, get the fuck out into the world and have some comparable adventures of your own. If it wasn't a comic, it'd be your new favorite band.

"Punk rock and comics go hand in hand—they're so intertwined for me," she says. "I guess comics don't have to be total teen angst, and punk rock doesn't either, but I just think it's perfect. I wish a lot more punk rockers were doing comics."

Janelle started Blarg in 1991, in art class at Pinole Valley High School, but she'd trampled her path to the dark side years before that. Her dad used to buy her and her brother Mad magazine, awakening her latent geek genes, she says. And then one fateful summer, she crushed on a punk boy at camp: "Because of some total fluke, he worked in the punk rock record store in the tiny town I lived in," she says. "So I would just go there and anything that had a skull on it, I'd buy it. I was just a self-taught punker."

Self-taught lots of other things, too: her comics are probably some of the most distinctive in punk; you'd recognize her gawping bug-eyed drunk punks from record covers, flyers, and probably even tattoos, all spattered all over this little subculture. Maybe you'd even recognize yourself, if you were at the right place at the right time: everybody's who's interesting enough to be anybody pops up as supporting characters.

"People are almost always into it and flattered," she says.
"Sometimes I'll meet people, like a roommate or a boyfriend, and they'll be like, 'Don't ever put me in your comic!' But I can see the look in their eye—I know they're secretly saying that because they want me to put them in there. They kind of protest too much."

But it's her life and her comic, and if you're in one, you're probably in the other. Underneath the dumpster-dived glitz and glamour that is Desperate Times is a faithful snapshot of the way it pretty much really was, a detailed document of everything she swore she'd never forget and then accidentally sort of forgot. It's the tiny things that amazed her the most, she says, and translating them into her comics keeps them from disappearing—it reminds her where and who she's been. Even if it's been embarrassing.

"Whole eras that are so poignant to me and a lot of other people are just lost," she says. "No one thought to record it because they were too busy living it. A lot of stuff I did when I was a teenager—being drunk in the bushes outside Gilman, stuff like that—I wish I had recorded a lot more of that. You think you can do all these different things without having them touch you, like water off a duck's back, but everything you do totally touches you. Memory is so fragile—you can't count on it at all."



#### NICK O'TEEN: "Please God, don't sue me."

The corporate machine had Nick O'Teen on his hands and knees by the time he was 19: he called it art, they called it grounds for a lawsuit, and that's how he ended up (toothbrush in hand and everything) scrubbing "THE PEASANTS ARE STARVING—LET THEM EAT SHIT" off a stolen fast-food restaurant sign.

"I was on student loans and living in my parents' basement," he says, "so I basically had to call them up and say, 'Please, God, don't sue me.' When you're 19 and you don't have any money, you realize how powerless you are. It's a wake-up call—I realized there are limitations to what you can do and get away with."

But if it wasn't for smashing head-on (and art-first) into those kinds of limitations, O'Teen wouldn't have anything to write about (well, he did do that series of masturbation-mishap comics, but you wouldn't want to make a life's work out of that, would you?). His is a history of getting pinned by the powers-that-be: after emigrating from Ireland to a tiny one-horse town in Canada, starting work in the sweltering depths of the fast-food jungle, and weathering years of smirking anti-poor-immigrant abuse, all that diffuse resentment was going to have to burst out somewhere. First, in a punk band; then in a unemployed anarchist friend's bid for town mayor (he lost, but not by much); and eventually in O'Teen's autobiographical comics.

"I was inspired by Orwell—the idea of using autobiography for political ends," he says. "Autobiography is harder to argue with. People can say they don't agree with your politics, but it's more difficult to say, 'I don't agree with your life experience.'"

It's all in his strip How to Make an Anarchist in Six Easy Steps, rendered in O'Teen's skritch-skratch Sunday-serials style (one of his earliest influences was a British weekly called 2000 AD, he says):

Catholic school, the sandbags and razor wire of Ireland, the nothing jobs and nowhere high schools in Kelowna, BC and the natural radicalization that came out of punk.

"If it wasn't for punk, I wouldn't have found Chomsky, wouldn't have gone back farther into classical anarchism," he says. Bands like the Dead Kennedys (the DK logo pop up frequently in O'Teen's comics) tipped him both to politics and the power of a bitter and knowing laugh. Subway and Taco Time, his sardonic saga of shit-jobbing through high school, laces work-sucks humor with abolish-the-wage system smarts and a raw honesty instantly accessible to anyone who's ever felt like killing their boss, whether they'd ever heard of the Dead Kennedys or not.

"It was kind of an attempt to step outside that feeling of being ghettoized, of people preaching to the converted," he says. "People who didn't read comics were reading them. They were published in the university paper and I know for a fact they were actually being cut out and put up in bulletin boards in McDonalds. In a sense, they were reaching the people they were intended for."

They were also reaching people who wanted to sue him—O'Teen had to duck another lawsuit after the toothbrush debacle, an incident which convinced him of the value in a pseudonym—but it's not like that slowed him down any. After all, he's not making any of his stories up.

"You definitely realize some people don't have much of a sense of humor. The increase in litigation against protesters has had a chilling effect on the artist who wants to do political issues," he says. "I feel like every time I put pen to paper, there's a chance that someone's going to come after me. But for me, satire is more effective when you name names. Your life is your life and you ought to be able to document it, but you can be sued for writing your life story. That seems insane to me."



#### CARRIE MCNINCH: "I always get those 'We're worried about you' letters."

Carrie McNinch doesn't want you to worry about her. Not about the drinking. Not about the break-ups. Or about the breakdowns. Or about anything in any of the starkly stylized true stories she tells in her comic zine *The Assassin and the Whiner*, because no matter how bad things have ever gotten, as long as she's able to put it on paper, she's doing OK.

"I always get those 'We're worried about you' letters," she says, "but if I'm writing about it, there's nothing to worry about. It's the things when you don't hear from somebody [that you have to worry]."

But she's definitely not writing for the faint of heart: Assassin is flayed-to-the-bone autobiography (complemented nicely by

McNinch's spare but hyperbolic visuals), bereft of any after-the-fact editing or fictionalization. It's part catharsis, part diary and (in some ways) part of that universal artistic struggle to figure out life and how to live it. And it's never boring: "There's a lot of people who write autobio stuff and it's just so bland," McNinch says. "Like, 'Today I did this, I saw this, then the birds flew by and they were beautiful.'"

So she writes about the serious stuff instead ("There are common themes, yeah," she says. "Mental problems, drinking problems—those two are very connected to each other."). It never occurred to her to not draw on her own life when she started putting her comic together, and it really never occurred to her to edit it for popular consumption. When she first shook herself out of the master plan her parents had constructed for her, the '80s had barely started, the first searing punk explosion was rippling through her native Southern California, and it wasn't a time for anyone to keep quiet about anything. McNinch learned lessons then that would persist for years.

"I grew up in that whole LA scene—at the time, it was Black Flag and the Circle Jerks—and that led to a whole 'Fuck you, I'll do what I want, and I really don't care what anyone else thinks' kind of thing," she says. "And I still really don't care what people think. Words can't hurt you, unless you use them to hide behind something."

She was in love as much with the music as the graphics that surrounded it, she says. Flyers by artists like Raymond Pettibon and Shawn Kerri hooked her when years of establishment art hadn't ("I did take art classes in high school, but being the LA school system, that doesn't count for much," she says.), and when she first saw the Hernandez brothers' Love and Rockets, there was no going back. But it didn't turn into the Assassin and the Whiner until 1994, on the tail end of a failed relationship and a move back to LA.

"I didn't even intend to do a zine," she says. "I just drew a couple of comics, and then a few months later, I had a job with a xerox machine, and it just kind of clicked: 'Oh, I can do this!'"

She still xeroxes and staples it all herself, reams of zines clogging her apartment floor, but now she prints 1,000 copies of Assassin, puts out three other irregular titles (Foodgeek, on cooking; Crush, on the sweetest spice of life, and Beer, on, well, duh), as well as contributing comics and illustrations to friends' zines internationally—Submission Hold guitarist Andy's tour-diary-cum-Tom-Robbins-novel I'm Johnny and I Don't Give A Fuck #4 features her artwork.

"My problem is I work on too much at once," she says.
"Some weeks I couldn't concentrate if I had to; other times, I don't even leave my apartment."

It's a healthy if demanding process, she says ("I don't write in a doom-and-gloomy way," she says. "People think that I'm depressed, but that's not necessarily negative."). But she knows that her nothing-left-out narratives sometimes make some people a little uncomfortable. Her mom, for one.

"You can't be squeamish—you gotta write what it is," she says. "But it's really awkward when friends read it. And I always

try and make sure my mom doesn't get a hold of them, but she found some stuff on the Internet—that was quite a phone call! I was like, 'Mom, if you wanna read it, you have to deal with it. It's your choice!"



#### NATE POWELL: "I'm making a mix tape for somebody."

Nate Powell tries really hard to not write about punk but sometimes it sneaks in: a riff from a song, or a certain shirt or patch, a bad tattoo or worse haircut, or a night out pool-hopping or stargazing. Sometimes it's even subtler: that small-town ennui, that teenage alienation that you know inside isn't just a phase, that desperate drive to communicate, maybe that stubborn search for somewhere to fit in and someone to share it with that's found voice in song after song after song. It's not something to pump your fist in the air to, but his comics might still be your life. Because in a lot of ways, they were his life, too.

"It's hard to hide your background, for sure," he says. "But part of what's thrilling about subcultural movements, punk being only one of them, is that they do work as a universal voice."

It's that universality that might make Powell's comics (the latest collected in his zine Walkie Talkie #2) so affecting-they feel like silent films, all nuance and submerged meaning in meticulous chiaroscuro black-and-white. As a military brat, he never stayed in one place for more than year or so, he says (though he eventually settled in Little Rock, Arkansas). But that could explain the pervasive sense of loss and nostalgia that seems to weave through his fiction. None dare call it emo: instead, it's a tender look at a fragile everyday life.

"I'd say what I portray is really fixated on this romantic homesick side of things, the getting lost in your own words and your own power," he says. "It's the sweet alienation, the sweet home sickness."

His stories read like fables, almost-they're big ideas writ intricately small, filtered through Powell's measured sensibility and reduced to their most potent basics. At least, that's how they start, he says. When something strikes him, he sketches out a thumbnail scene then and there and waits for the hidden connections to tease themselves out.

"I'll have these scenes that have nothing to do with each other, things I've seen looking outside of car window or staying up late with my friends," he says. "I'll wind up with maybe 20 of these little scenes, and I'll string them together-I feel a lot like I'm making a mix tape for somebody."

It could take months, he says-and that's before the real work even begins. His comics take weeks, eked out with a crowquill pen, calculated to draw out the natural rhythms of the narrative and the visuals. He grew up with superheroes and

Japanese animation like lots of other small-town kids with TV sets, which he thinks explains the iconic quality of his characters, but school honed his technique and broadened his influences ("The film Magnolia blows my sweet top off," he says). And of course there's punk-maybe you've seen him caterwauling along with Soophie Nun Squad this summer-but there's always been more than just that.

"I come from a standpoint of being a visual artist driven to be involved in music, because some things I can't fully bring out in visual art," he says, "but the little camera inside myself views me as a storyteller first. Most important to myself, I am a narrator."

And so he tells stories-tangential to a subculture but still soaring past it, toward something that taps into the classical.

"Right now, I'm really trying to wrestle with what is turning into my current vision for storytelling," he says. "And a lot of it has to do with going with an impression, sparking peoples' memories with a universal shot, or a universal series of events."

But it's the universal rooted in the personal-after all, you write what you know. And that's why you might find yourself in Powell's comics—because part of you might be part of the story.

"Right outside here and everywhere else I've lived, there's just these nice little bleak sleepy Southern towns," he says. "And passing all these kids in front of parks and gas stations, I can't help but wonder what their day is like-if they're planning on escaping, or if they have these lofty dreams that are exactly the same as mine."



#### FLY: "I have always enjoyed being oversaturated."

Fly is a product of her environment—and proud of it. Take her comics apart and you'll find the mechanisms of her daily life firing away inside: the hyperkinetic energy of punk, the hardnosed practicality of the hardcore squatter, the fractured vision of her schizophrenic mother and the bracing chaos of New York City at its most intense. And just like everything else in her life, it's all going full-speed-ahead at once.

"It's sort of the way I experience the world—every situation there are a million things happening at the same time," she says. "It might have something to do with being brought up by a schizophrenic but I seem to be hypersensitive to all stimuli. I have always enjoyed being oversaturated. It's the nature of the experience of life: total chaos-but everything functioning within that chaos."

And that chaos is alive in her artwork: her comics are hyperdense black holes of detail and action, characters and thought and environment melting in and out of each other. Every word has a double meaning; every character has at least two faces. Her stories are often based in reality, she says, but drawn to fit her own subjective perceptions—it might look like a dream world, but it's where she really lives.

"A lot of my comics are based on true experiences of squatting and gutter punkism and growing up in a chaotic environment," she says. "I'm looking to tell good stories that are based on truth but not slave to it."

Sometimes it's a little too true (one guy recognized himself from a comic, got pissed, and screams and throws bottles at her on the street, even IO years after the fact, she says), but in characters like Stew Pitt—the crusty everyman who'll turn you into stew in the pit—she takes playful pokes at the police, the politicians, and the punks that populate her life.

"I think it is important to be able to laugh at the idiocy of our 'oppressors' and also laugh at ourselves," she says. "I don't think the political aspect has to be dogmatic or too obvious—the most important thing is encourage people to be able to use their imaginations. This is a political act in itself when we live in a 'system' that dictates certain lifestyles for specific social and economic classes. Too many people become 'slaves to the system' because they can't imagine that there might be another way."

So she tries to show them. As a DIY artist, she says she feels a responsibility to literally illustrate the alternatives, to help people revive their imaginations. Her comics, she hopes, are as much inspiration as entertainment.

"One of my favorite responses to my comics was when some young punk squatter kids used my comic Gement Mixin' Squatter Bitches as their guide for how to mix cement," she says. "I would love to put together a whole DIY guide to squatter construction; make it like a story but with useful information in it. I like to do comics about squatting just to communicate to people the reality of living that way—that it is a viable option and anyone can do it."

Right now, she's working on a new book (her most recent book, Chron!C!Riots!Pa!Sm! is available from Autonomedia; also see her zine Fuck the Shut Up) called Peops. It's other peoples' stories put to her art, and another attempt to lovingly capture the chaotic life she sees around her.

"For me, one of the most important things about the work that I do is that it's a documentation of an invisible history—it's the events you don't see on mainstream TV," she says. "I've done portraits of people of all different ages and races and social classes and all of these people are part of the real history, no matter how insignificant they might seem. Every one has incredible stories to tell."

#### THE FUTURE: "Seek it out yourself."

But they're still stories that you might have to scramble to hear for yourself—sandwiched between the wheezing mainstream comics apparatus and the punk zine world, DIY artists sometimes have to struggle to get their works distributed anywhere besides their bathroom bookshelf. Besides the big-time Diamond distribution network (the nation's principal comic distro, servicing comic-book stores, much like how Mordam brings stacks of LPs and CDs toppling into your record store every week), the apparatus for spreading punk-scale comics is pretty anemic.

"It's tough," says Laris Kreslin, who is working on beefing

up Insound.com's selection of comics. "The best way for fans these days is to seek it out yourself through mailorder or websites. There are a few stores, but they're few and far between. The network and resources aren't as readily available as they are for music."

Or ask Fly about the practical effects of living as a DIY artist: "Economically?" she says, "what a laugh!" In her personal suffer-for-your-art file: arthritis in her hands, no hot water and plumbing in her squat before two years ago, no extra cash for dental work ("I wish there was a punk dental plan besides duct tape," she says), and so on—you get the picture. DIY sometimes turns into DYI (driving yourself insane), especially when you don't have guitar-rock glamour on your side.

But it's getting better, sort of. Very slowly, comics are battling their way out of the superhero ghetto into someplace almost aesthetically respectable. And if things are a mess, at least they're a bigger mess than they once were. If you can't make a living (and please help DIY artists make a living—they deserve dental plans), you can at least have a life. Nate Powell remembers going to an underground press conference and finding that the self-publishing community had broken way beyond punk to touch squares who just wanted to communicate in their time off from work.

"There was some guy there with a JC Penney's suit, selling some comic—turned out he was some social studies teacher from the University of Arkansas, 30 minutes from where we lived," he says. "A few years ago, it would have been a strictly punk/DIY event. It strengthens it so much to have knocked out some of the exclusivity."

But it's still a tiny community within a tiny community: Janelle remembers how excited she'd get when she'd run into another comic artist, just because they're so hard to find. Anyone can make a zine, anyone can play guitar, anyone can figure out some endearing contrived way to get their angst out in one big emo explosion-but, she says, they never seem to sit down, pencil out some squares and start telling a story. She's still working on a theory to explain it.

"Comics are marginalized a lot—people tend to look at it and just write it off without really exploring it," she says. "I don't know how it came about. Maybe people just can't draw." ©



# CHICAGO'S BARRIO MURAL MOVE



hen Hector Duarte visited Chicago's largely Mexican Pilsen neighborhood in 1978 for an international muralism convention, he felt like he'd found the new home of mural art. Duarte, a student at the Taller Siquieros workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where students learn the art of famous muralist David Alfaro Siquieros, notes that the Mexican mural movement had severely stagnated.

"From the '50s on, muralism died in Mexico," Duarte explains. "I was looking for the new generation of muralists."

In Pilsen, Chicano and Mexican muralists were doing countless large-scale works on political, cultural and artistic themes, often evoking the styles of Siquieros and Diego Rivera.

"I was very excited when I saw all these different techniques, and all these people from around the world working together," says Duarte. "I was thinking that in the future I wanted to live here."

The Chicano mural movement was born during political struggles in LA in the '60s, and quickly bloomed in Chicago's barrios as well, right around the same time the African-American

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# MENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Kari Lydersen



mural movement was taking off. By the time Duarte had secured a visa and made arrangements to come to the US in 1985, however, things had changed.

"By then there were only two or three main people doing murals," says Duarte, pointing to possible reasons including the changing political climate, the lure of higher paying gallery and commercial art, and the fact that many of the old guard had families or moved back to Mexico. "I had a choice of returning to Mexico or starting to work. I started to work solo in 1987, doing

murals commissioned by the city colleges, the schools and others. I think a little resurgence started."

His style quickly became more political, he notes.

"At first people called what I was doing ranchero (country) art," he said. "Then I started to paint more Chicano."

Now, he says, few people in the area do murals without getting paid like he does, and it is hard for anyone to fit in this unpaying work along with the teaching, commercial art, and other gigs necessary to make a living. A significant number of



"FOR 30 YEARS OR MORE THESE KIDS WERE GROWING UP WITH THESE IMAGES, THEY CARRY THOSE IMPRESSIONS THROUGH THEIR WHOLE LIFE, AND NOW THEY ARE ARTISTS IN OTHER AREAS, DOING COMPUTERS, DRAWING, DOING PUBLICITY, BECOMING TEACHERS AND BRINGING ART INTO THE SCHOOLS."

—Hector Duarte

murals in Pilsen and Little Village, the community just to the west which is also predominantly made up of Mexican immigrants, have been lost to attrition, as they are taken down for new developments, brown-washed by the city under the guise of graffiti removal or simply fall prey to the elements.

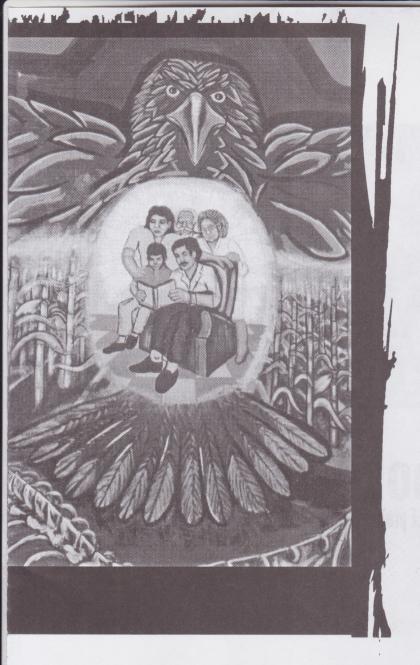
Nonetheless, the area continues to boast a vibrant public art scene, with murals being the most highly visible manifestations of an independent, often highly political art culture that includes local punk rock bands, spoken word performances, a local radio station, printmaking, mixed media, photos and painting in galleries and cafes, and even computer graphics. Murals are particularly popular in the schools, with local artists commissioned for large scale works both inside and outside the buildings. Duarte attributes this to the generation of people who grew up with the vibrant mural movement of the past

becoming parents and demanding their children be surrounded by art at school.

"The murals painted in the Chicano movement are bearing fruit now," he explains.

Some of the most luminary names of the past haved moved away or are no longer active in the scene. But the few older generation mentors that do remain have helped bring crowds of youth and community members into the public art movement.

"I always say all art is political," says Jose Guerrero, who has painted murals in Pilsen for over 20 years and leads tours of the neighborhood murals. "In the '30s when Mexican muralists were painting, World War II was starting so they were dealing with fascism. Well, things haven't changed that much—the KKK still exists. Mexicans are like the new Okies, we're the only ones still picking cotton because no one else will do that kind of work.



These are the kind of things you paint about in murals."

Heavy gentrification is going on in Pilsen, especially on the east end of the neighborhood where one landlord owns well over IOO buildings rented almost solely to young, non-Latino artists. This has taken a toll on the mural scene, as some murals have been destroyed for new developments and the influx of new investment has led the city to be stricter with "graffiti control" that often means erasing beautiful graffiti murals or even long-standing non-graffiti murals that are peppered with gang tags. The first mural Duarte painted in Chicago, a scene evoking Mexican cultural icons on a metal factory in Little Village, is being demolished to build a mall.

But the threat of gentrification has also been the spark for several of the most exciting new murals of the past several years.

The prime example is 1997's Alto al Desplazamiento Urbano de Pilsen (Stop the Gentrification in Pilsen), a large colorful mural painted by

various artists including Duarte. The mural features homages to Cesar Chavez, Emiliano Zapata and local activist Rudy Lozano, who was slain in his home. allegedly as a result of his controversial work. It shows an elotero, the corn vendors who have been under attack by stringent city regulations, being clawed at by a robed KKK member. Protesters in the mural carry signs denouncing the TIF (tax increment financing zone), a much-vilified urban renewal program that the city finally imposed on the neighborhood after a bitter battle by local activists.

Another mural that refers to gentrification is the 1998 work "Protect Pilsen," a collaboration which uses a Monopoly board as the base for a battle between community members and greedy developers with wrecking balls.

Linda Lutton, a journalist who is married to Duarte, noted that with some exceptions, recent murals differ from the overtly political, revolutionary style of the Mexican Revolution or the '60s and '70s Chicano movement in the US. The Virgin of Guadalupe images and family scenes frequently painted by Jeff Zimmerman and others, for example, evoke Mexican culture but don't directly address political issues or battles. Duarte's most recent project is both political and whimsical—a Latino version of Gulliver wrapping around the outside of his home and studio.

"It's something more than gentrification that causes the murals to be less political," Lutton says. "It's definitely a reflection of society."

Guerrero, who teaches classes at the studio space Taller Mestizarte, said many local muralists would rather work in more permanent mediums like tile mosaic and metal, but there is little money for these expensive projects. "The scaffolding alone costs \$300 a week," he explains.

Duarte noted that while the Chicago Public Art Group, a non-profit, used to fund a lot of work in Pilsen, he feels they are now more focused on African-American murals on the South Side and commercial, tourist-oriented art downtown.

Partly because there is more funding for youth programs, a good bit of the recent mural work has been done by students, both Mexican-Americans from the area and students from other parts of the city. The entire 18<sup>th</sup> Street train station is blanketed in Aztec and other Indian symbols, portraits of Frida Kahlo, pictures of animals and countless other small works done by local students in the early '90s. In September, Guerrero started a fiveweek mural project with art students from DePaul University, on the building of the local activist group Pilsen Neighbors.

"I wanted to make sure kids from the neighborhood got involved in painting the mural," he says. "You don't want to just bring in all these white students as if there aren't artists here."

Artists like Duarte express negative feelings about the overall health of the Pilsen mural movement, but they are also hopeful about the general wealth of young artists in the area.

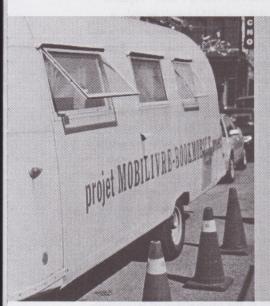
"For 30 years or more these kids were growing up with these images," Duarte explains. "They carry those impressions through their whole life, and now they are artists in other areas, doing computers, drawing, doing publicity, becoming teachers and bringing art into the schools."

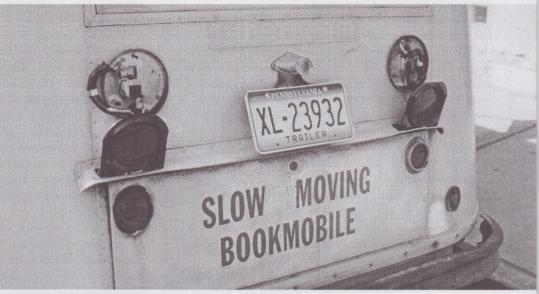
As far as whether they are political or not...

"They just need a little kick in the ass," says Duarte gently, in Spanish. "That's what we're here for."



Books On The Run:
The projet MOBILIVRE-BOOKMOBILE project builds a bridge between zines and book arts.
By Andy Cornell





hile the merits of latest trends and sub-genres of music are debated endlessly in conversation, on the web, and in the pages of punk magazines, it seems that zines, "the other punk medium," are rarely given such attention.

What kinds of stylistic innovations have occurred in the last few years? Where are zines going in terms of content and form? Are they still relevant, and for whom?

This fall, a group of US and Canadian zine makers and artists are raising these types of questions as they cross the continent in a 26-foot-long vintage Airstream trailer bulging with zines, artist books, and other independent publications. Determined to inject the art world and zine scene with much needed new blood, a collective of five women have spent more than a year creating projet MOBILIVRE-BOOKMOBILE project, a multi-lingual traveling exhibition featuring hundreds of examples of the best work independently-produced publications have to offer.

The collective behind the project wants it to go far beyond the constraints and conventions of a typical art show. The Bookmobile, explains group member Courtney Dailey, is also intended to encourage new groups of people to create their own works, to enable artists to share skills and perspectives, and to provoke discussion about broad issues such as corporate control of art and information.

"We want to bring artist books and zines to people who haven't had access to them at all. And we want to connect book artists with zine makers who live in the same cities, as well as those who live across the country from one another."

In this spirit, the Bookmobile is visiting a number of com-

munities not traditionally known as centers of underground media and book arts, such as Springfield, Massachusetts and Glenis, Alberta, during its initial five-month tour. The group is trying to avoid predictable venues as well. "We'll be stopping at senior citizen centers, at prisons, youth centers, schools, and other places like that. We want zine editors and artists to come out and participate, but we also want to encourage people who haven't made them before. That's not very likely to happen if the events are all at art galleries or record stores," explains collective member Ginger Brooks Takahashi.

Toward the same ends, the Bookmobile project team gives presentations and facilitates practical, hands-on workshops at every stop on the tour. Presenters demonstrate various binding methods, cut and paste layout techniques, and tricks and tips on using photocopiers, letter-presses, and other printing devices. At times they also delve into the more theoretical or academic aspects of the arts, providing histories of printing and books, or short seminars on language and power. The specific workshops vary at each stop on the tour.

"We try to tailor what we talk about to the specific audience in each place. If it's a group of people who have never seen this type of work before, it's probably important to talk about how it developed, and maybe some basics of how it's done. If we're talking with a roomful of people who have all made their own zines and books, then we'd probably want to do something more challenging, like have everyone practice an advanced book binding technique," explains Takahashi

The Bookmobile project also requests that each venue hosting an event present at least one workshop of its own. This pushes

local artists and zine makers to learn how to organize events, and to participate in and contribute to the project, rather than just passively view the work on display. Attempting to move audience members beyond their roles as spectators was one of their main inspirations for starting the endeavor.

The idea for projet MOBILIVRE-BOOKMOBILE project originated in a show organized at a Montreal gallery in the fall of 1998 by a group of artists including Dailey, Onya Hogan-Finlay, and Rebecca Watt. The show was an attempt at solving problems that plagued other exhibitions of zines and artist books—namely that they were displayed under glass, or in other ways that prevented them from being handled. In the case of art books, the conventions of the art world prohibited the audience from experiencing the pieces as they were intended. For their show, therefore, the group redecorated the gallery as a library, replete with comfortable chairs and a prudish looking librarian able to offer explanations and assistance. The design of the show encouraged attendees not only to touch the materials, but also to curl up with the different pieces and delve into them. Overwhelmingly successful, the

# What makes the Bookmobile project powerful and unique is that it has a definite agenda.

show demonstrated to its organizers the need to expand the concept and hinted at the possibilities of bringing it to new audiences offered.

The Bookmobile project was fashioned in a manner reminiscent of the original show, but adapted to the limitations of being contained in a small trailer that would be hauled around the continent for months on end. With additional members Takashi and Leila Pourtavaf on board, the group began with a call for submissions and an intensive round of fund-raising work. Money eventually trickled in from different sectors-benefit shows and art auctions, donations, and a few modest grants. Upon finding an Airstream in decent condition, Takahashi and Dailey, and a crew of volunteers stripped it of its kitsch 1959 interior, and worked with the Freecell Design Collective to redecorate and configure it to meet their needs. The freshly painted internal walls are now lined with shallow shelves, thin bungee cords stretched across their faces, to hold the materials securely in place, while prominently displaying the covers, and leaving the books and zines easily accessible. A cushioned bench and moveable stools provide space for viewers to take their time with all the pieces that interest them.

The works themselves are as wide ranging in subject matter and style as the larger communities in which they come from. Included are political zines with press runs in the thousands and one-of-a-kind illustrated books made from homemade paper hand stitched together and decorated with ink and paint by the

artists. The collective purposefully chose to display works of such diverse styles together in one show as a challenge not only to the audience, but to the artists as well. "We're trying to push the question of, 'What is an art book and what is a zine," explains Lisbeth Pelsue, a zinemaker, and one of the tour's workshop presenters. "There really is a lot of cross-over between zines and artist books, but it seems like the people who make zines often know very little about artist books, and vice versa."

Generally, both are bound works combining text and visuals, often made by hand and produced in limited quantities. The techniques of stenciling, collage, etching, and text manipulation are common to both forms. While zines are nearly always photocopied or printed on an offset press, book artists traditionally invest more effort and higher quality materials into the actual production process of each copy—printing them with a letterpress, stitching the bindings, hand coloring illustrations, and attaching additional materials to individual pages, for example.

Zines have historically been more journalistic than artist books, documenting punk shows, reviewing records, and discussing political issues. However, the shift in content over the last 15 years to zines focused mostly on the intimate details of the authors' lives, represented in the progression of terminology-fanzine to zine to the now common perzine-has brought with it changes in style and production values that have begun to blur the lines between zines and art books. Personal zines are often produced on an even smaller scale than fanzines-editors frequently only make enough copies to give to their close friends and others whom they decide on a case-by-case basis to entrust their deeply personal writings to. Creating for such an intentionally limited audience gives zine writers the opportunity to use creative materials-envelopes, transparencies, or colored inks-to further personalize each copy. This, along with content that is often abstract, prosaic, and narrative, lend them the feel of artist books.

"We think that each genre has a lot to offer," Pelsue explains. "So we're hoping to bridge the worlds of artist books and zines, and see what sort of innovative stuff people make when they influence one another."

In posing the question of boundaries, the Bookmobile project also raises other issues as well. Can an artist book be a publication, and are zines art? What new forms will these creations take if new communities, with their own experiences and their own traditions of artistic expression, begin to integrate zine and book publishing methods into their work? Perhaps most importantly, the project asks questions about spectatorship and participation, the function of art in people's lives, and about control of whose stories and opinions are heard.

What makes the Bookmobile project powerful and unique is that it has a definite agenda. Dailey, Takahashi, Pelsue, and the other creators don't simply raise these questions with diverse audiences; they attempt to answer them through the very form the project takes. Their mission statement reads, in part, "We aim to engage with thinkers, readers, and makers across North America in the context

of their communities. In the increasingly monopolized world of mainstream media, it is imperative that work that challenges the status quo, affirms the lives of its creators, and problematizes corporate control is available to the widest audience possible."

With these goals and principles, the projet MOBILIVRE-BOOKMOBILE project also helps solve the common dilemma of zine editors who desire a wider audience, yet cringe at the idea of their work being distributed by corporate retailers or displayed under the auspices of the mainstream "art world." The project is an independent, Do-It-Yourself project, dreamed up and realized by punks, zine makers, and independent artists. It provides a new avenue for people to be exposed to zines, without trying to hock them at jacked up prices. At the same time, it's not a traditional gallery.

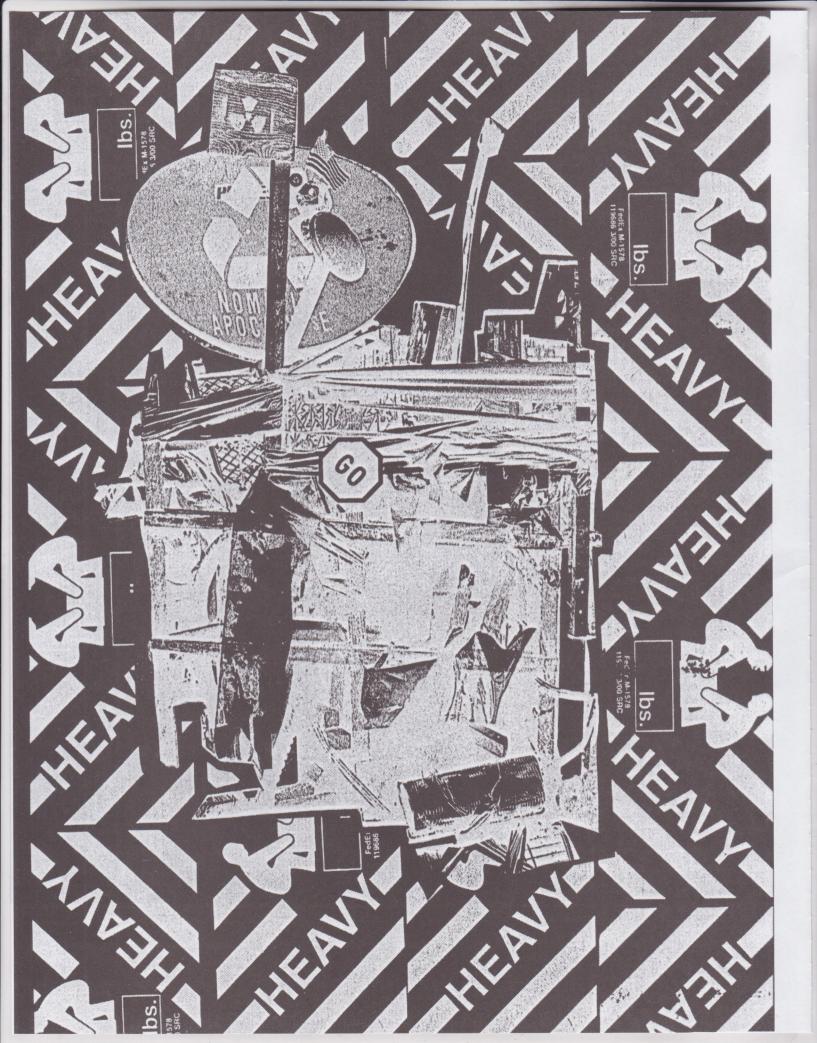
The bookmobile brings the show to people where they are at-their community centers, prisons, and schools. Therefore the atmosphere of the event is dependent on where the Airstream happens to be parked, rather than the air of a gallery, where many might feel uncomfortable. The works can be interacted with and are not presented as masterpieces, created by gifted professionals. The fact that each exhibition is coupled with practical workshops that seek to encourage bookmobile visitors to create their own works, extends to the entire BOOKMOBILE project the participatory and dialogic qualities that are fundamental to making zines a unique and compelling medium.

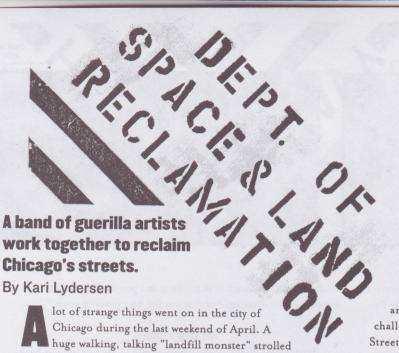
"The dream," says Dailey, "is that people come out to the events on this first tour, get inspired, make their own zines and books, and send them to us to be included in a new show on the next tour."

Takahashi adds, "Yeah, this is just the beginning! We definitely want to keep touring with the bookmobile. We'll get new works, go to new towns, and recruit new participants. Keep the cycle going as long as it's exciting and relevant."

Andy Cornell publishes a zine called The Secret Files of Captain Sissy. He can be reached at captainsissy@girlswirl.net







work together to reclaim Chicago's streets.

By Kari Lydersen

lot of strange things went on in the city of Chicago during the last weekend of April. A huge walking, talking "landfill monster" strolled down the Michigan Avenue Magnificent Mile, the city's glitziest shopping district, berating people for their excessive shopping habits and moaning about not being able to swallow any more trash. Also on Michigan Avenue, a squad of people cloaked in white work suits rolled a huge "ball of trash" down the sidewalk. At the Chicago Board of Trade, a group from around the country called The Society for the Representation of Society break danced and performed stunts around a rolling piece of random objects and debris, entitled the "Nomadic Apocalypse." Heavy breathing, moaning and other "Zombie sounds" emanated from trash cans and subway tunnels. Wire nests, looking like the homes of futuristic termites, showed up on Stop signs and lightposts around the city. Cars did a loud automotive ballet in a lot off Lake Street. A woman culminated her weeks-long project of going up to random men on the street and asking them to kiss her passionately, on film. Meanwhile, bands of other women roamed the streets harassing men, subjecting them to the kind of catcalls and obscene comments that women are all-too familiar with. In the Lincoln Square neighborhood on the northwest side, a community organization's ongoing campaign against gentrification and the local alderman's role in it grabbed the public eye, with stickers and fliers denouncing Starbucks' entry into the community and heavily controlled city news and advertising kiosks were transformed into forums for news the city doesn't want its residents to hear. Ladders mysteriously appeared on fences and walls all over the city, offering a symbolic route over these metaphorical and physical barriers. And stickers and graffiti blossomed around the city, including stickers saying "Save the Mermaid's Nipples, Boycott Starbucks" in reference to the coffee giant's cleansing of its former racier logo. Two adjacent billboards in heavily gentrified Wicker Park were tagged to read "Ethnic Cleansing." Appropriately, the one bearing the word "Ethnic" was an opulent ad for Air Italia, while the one reading "Cleansing" was for Tide detergent. Meanwhile, Guerrilla Love Radio, a local pirate radio station, broadcast news of these goings

on along with underground music and rants on local political issues.

This hodge podge of political and situationist art and events was the work of the Department of Space and Land Reclamation (DSLR), a project dedicated to challenging and undoing the work of the Department of Streets and Sanitation, the Department of Housing, the Police Department and the various other government and corporate entities that make it a daily practice to remind people who is in control of the city.

Parks, roads, and other public spaces in Chicago and other cities should and do technically belong to the people who live in the city, work long hours and give a community its vitality and life. But more and more, these public spaces are becoming figuratively and literally privatized, with every inch of public space potential fodder for commercial advertisers, and with regulations prohibiting actual public uses of space such as spontaneous art, "disorderly conduct," or even sleeping in parks or on benches.

"Global capital has reached such a point that both the physical and intellectual landscape have been completely purchased," reads the DSLR manifesto handed out at the event's headquarters, a loft known as The Butcher Shop on Lake Street in the industrial area just west of downtown. "To exist today means to tread on the property of others. The city has increasingly become a space completely built around consumerism. The freedom of expression has come to mean the freedom to advertise. Advertisements on billboards, advertisements on public buses and trains, advertisements on clothes, advertisements on radio, advertisements on television, advertisements on menus. Like a minefield of manipulative codes, urban space has been designed to maneuver us from one point of sale to the next. Racist and classist anti-loitering and anti-gang laws have been instituted across the country as increasingly individuals and cultures are illegalized to protect rising property values."

#### **DSLR** is Born

The DSLR event in April was the culmination of several months of planning that brought together individual artists, activists, and groups from around Chicago and the country. There were over 60 planned projects going on during the event, as well as countless spontaneous sticker and graffiti raids and performances. It was scheduled specifically to fall between the anti-



globalization protests during the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) talks in Quebec City the previous week and the May Day workers' holiday the following week.

The Butcher Shop served as a hub and meeting spot for the events. Graffiti by local artists blanketed the walls of the space, which also included a floor-to-ceiling art gallery with collages of wheatpasted posters and photos of graffiti and other public art from around the country. Guerrilla Love Radio (107.1FM) broadcasted out of the space, with the mic open to anyone who chose to take it.

Reclaiming of land and space took place in literal, symbolic and psychological forms in the various projects. The physical reclaiming of space took place through things like stickers and graffiti. The symbolic reclaiming of power happened through political messages about consumerism and democracy. Overall, artists claimed psychological rebellion against the homogenization of culture and the social norms that suppress things like spontaneous creativity, freedom of expression and public displays of affection.

"Radical culture in Chicago is very vibrant but really all over the place," explains Nato Thompson, one of the organizers of the event and the curator of the CounterProductive Industries exhibit the year before, which helped spawn DSLR. "The trick is to bring these different groups into proximity with each other."

"When you're doing public political artwork there is a sense of isolation," adds Amanda Klonsky, an artist and activist who organized poetry readings during the event. "This re-energized a lot of people and brought people together. When you get white punk anarchists, hip hop kids, graffiti writers and Art Institute

students in one place like this, too many people are ready to expect a social disaster. But this was the best party in town."

#### **Art and Politics**

With participants coming from a mix of art and activist backgrounds, the organizers made it a focus of the event to challenge and examine artists' roles in the communities they live in, including the fact that artists often unintentionally serve as a developer's best friend when an area is undergoing gentrification. The Lincoln Square project dealt directly with gentrification, with the campaign targeting Alderman Eugene Schulter, who has notoriously courted high-priced developers and pushed through zoning changes that displace lower-income, long-time residents. Around the time of the event, Schulter had placed a \$5,000 "bounty" on the head of a young tagger who had been painting anti-yuppie slogans on local buildings, which Schulter argued was a hate crime. Along with graffiti and hip hop artists, one of the panels featured a representative of the First Defense Legal Aid organization, which provides free lawyers at the station right after arrest to all minors and to some adults charged with felonies.

Participants noted that the DSLR event was significant in that it did foster more cooperation and interaction than often occurs between historically segregated groups of artists and activists in Chicago.

"It's extremely hard to bring together an interracial group of artists to work on a project," says Klonsky. "Even for radical artists, it's very hard to sit down and say we have a problem with racism. That weekend was a multi-racial group of people, from





different classes and different political leanings."

In organizing meetings before the event, participants expressed a desire and commitment that the DSLR event not be a one-time thing, but an ongoing effort for change, including building links between community organizations and artists.

These goals have been met so far with varying degrees of success. Regular but very loosely organized meetings are ongoing, open to anyone interested in the DSLR idea. Not surprisingly the loose ongoing group includes far more "artists" than "regular" community members with families and jobs that require them to work long hours.

Key organizers of the event say they have mixed feelings about the ongoing existence of DSLR and the composition or goals of the group.

"I have a perpetual fascination with trying to kill DSLR," admits artist Josh MacPhee, one of the main organizers of the event. "I don't want this to become an example of branding, which is how capital and corporate power regenerates itself. You have these logos where workers become proud of the fact that they are producing crap for little money. We don't want to brand ourselves as the next franchise activist group that everyone wants to align themselves with. I feel like it's time to do other things, not to be a group that's just concerned with perpetuating itself."

"If the name is needed for press or whatever, that works, but we want this to be something that is decentralized, to have people working in loosely organized subgroups," says organizer Emily Forman.

For good or bad, the DSLR "movement" has taken on a life of its own, with participants in various campaigns claiming the moniker as their own.

Currently, a movement to "liberate the Real World Seven" has been one of the main efforts of the loosely-organized DSLR crew. This is referring to the infamous MTV show The Real World, which is currently being filmed at a loft at the über-trendy Milwaukee-Damen-North intersection in Wicker Park. Wicker Park, now almost completely consumed by expensive night clubs, restaurants and high-end art galleries, was for many years the benchmark of gentrification in the city, with former Mexican and Polish residents pushed out for waves of artists, musicians and finally businesspeople and wealthy suburban transplants. While the mass media has tagged the Real World protests as being about gentrification, the protesters who have showed up by the hundreds on several occasions articulate a critique that goes far beyond gentrification, The Real World, MTV and its parent company Viacom are the epitome of the consumerism, homogenization and corporate control that are plaguing our cities and lives, activists say. At one protest several people were arrested on charges ranging from reckless conduct to obstructing an officer, and several reported being roughed up by cops.

In on-line debates, a number of activists remarked that the outrage expressed by Real World protesters at their treatment by police indicated they were indeed sheltered from and oblivious to the kind of police repression that minority communities suffer every day.

# **Attacking Corporate Public Art**

The DSLR philosophy holds particular ire for co-opted public art that is used to further privatize space—for example bland abstract sculptures that result in the paving over of badly



needed green spaces, or city-sponsored murals that replace traditional graffiti walls, or public sculptures designed specifically to keep people from sitting or sleeping on them.

An ongoing DSLR project dubbed "Daley Village" (after the Chicago mayor) has been to target the city's Suite Home Chicago displays, a city-wide public art project which is the follow-up to the internationally-known Cows on Parade project of two years ago. As with Cows on Parade, corporations sponsor pieces of public art—in this case plastic living room sets including couches, coffee tables and TVs—which are decorated by artists in keeping with the corporation's wishes and displayed around the city. Throughout the summer DSLR participants were plotting a massive surprise demonstration to point out that while the city and corporations can find money to build fake living rooms all over

able to be quirky and weird, not just linear."

Public art projects, even things that might not be overtly political like a woman kissing strange men on the street or a ball of trash rolling down the street, serve to spark the creativity and organic modes of expression that are stifled by the current capitalist and heavily-policed society.

"There is a very limited, narrow role that creativity is allowed to play in our social movements," explains Klonsky. "Maybe something creative will spice things up a little, invigorate people. Like if you paint a beautiful stencil in a weird place, it's not saying overthrow capitalism, it's just a stencil. That's not telling people what to think, but it makes people think."

And artists, who may become consumed with their own work and passions while forgetting or never learning of the



the city, Chicago's homeless population continues to grow with little housing relief. The Cows on Parade suffered a similar space reclamation in 1999, when activists placed actual cow manure under the animals with signs saying "The Real Poop" and giving history lessons about the assassination of Fred Hampton and other things the city wants to forget.

#### **Ripple Effects**

Perhaps the most important ripple effect of DSLR and movements like it is the fact that it shook up both artists and activists regarding things that have been neglected in their movements. Many political artists complain that political art and other forms of protest have become for the most part dogmatic and boring.

"The problem with a lot of political art is that it's very instrumentalist and didactic," says Thompson. "You want to be

political and economic struggles of the people around them, can be woken up to these issues through a reinvigorated political art scene.

"Art strictly defined is very alienating," says Thompson. "It has a long history of being bourgie and purposely elitist."

Whether the increasingly trendy "DSLR" handle continues to exist or not, Klonsky, Forman, Thompson, MacPhee and other participants hope the kind of diverse and celebratory energy and rebellion that was fostered in April continues to grow.

"One thing about most of the DSLR projects is the fact that you're breaking the law," MacPhee explains. "I think that's valuable, first, for the person doing it—I try to encourage people to break the law as much as possible. And it's also important for the viewer, who sees someone transgressing the rules and more of a space is created to do that."

< PEDRO THE LION

# JADE TREE >>

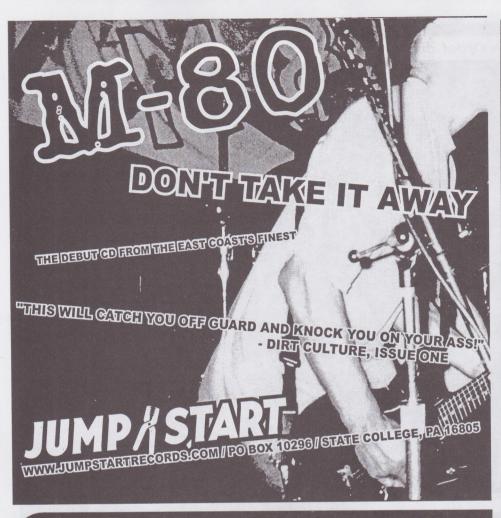


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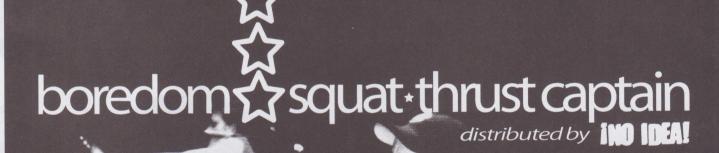
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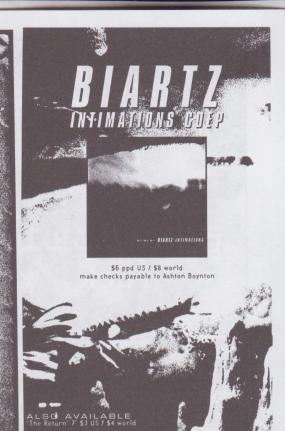


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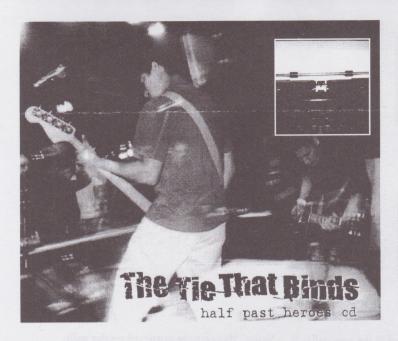
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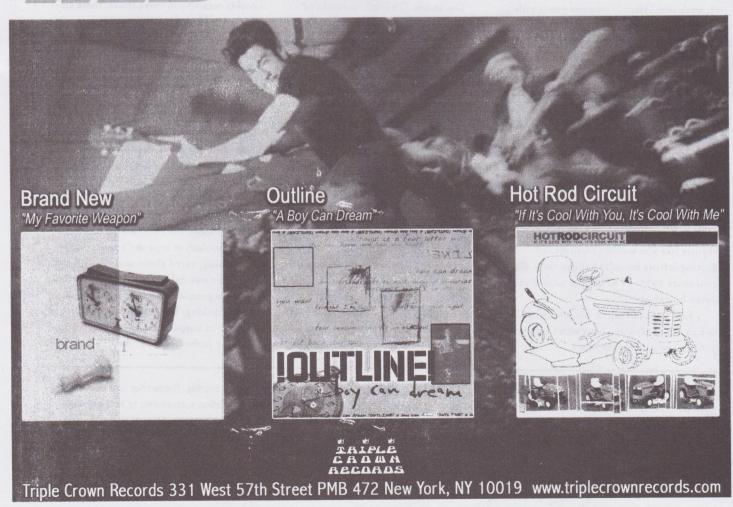
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# If Words Could Kill

by Steven Wishnia

t's six o'clock, it's 40 degrees and raining, and there's a giant screw slowly twisting into my left temple. I'm supposed to go cover a fund-raiser for Mayor Cazzo at seven. Old man Radigan says go down there, see if you can get a quote out of him about vacancy decontrol. I got all this shit to wrap up before I can get out of the office, the phone's ringing, shut down the computer, wash two Tylenol codeines down with the dregs of my fifth coffee of the day, Radigan's going on about back when they enacted rent control in '68 and how they weakened it in '81, he's been at the Eye since it was a hippie underground rag called the Third Eye back in 1967. The hotel's downtown, five stops away on the subway. A couple hundred protesters are across the street, penned up behind police barricades and a hundred riot cops, chanting "Hey hey, ho ho, Mayor Cazzo's got to go." I wish they'd come up with some new chants. There's kids who barely made it through 10th grade flowing rhymes like you wouldn't believe, and fucking leftists haven't changed their slogans since 1975. "The people united will never be defeated."

Riot cops tell me to move on when I talk to the protesters. They won't let any pedestrians stop on the block.

The security guard at the gate stalls checking my press card, wants to see my driver's license too. I look like shit. I need a haircut. It's not rock'n'roll long hair or even hippie long hair, just a gone-to-seed, can't-be-bothered-to-give-a-shit look. Well, reporters are supposed to look like shit. Immaculate grooming is for TV Ken dolls who get paid 20 times my salary for small talk with celebrities.

Get inside. The full spectrum of Republican money's out tonight, stockbrokers smirking in three-piece suits, women in red blazers with frozen blonde hair, obvious mob types—hey, don't ask me no fuckin' questions. I'm easily the worst-dressed person in the room. The lining's falling out of my overcoat and I'm wearing an Eye baseball cap to keep the rain out of my eyes. None of these people ever have to walk in the rain. They're slumming if they have to hail a cab by themselves. It's all black cabs and limos, awning to awning. Only the little people get exposed to the elements.

I'd love to get a 55-gallon oil drum full of liquid LSD and put it in the coffee, the martinis, the white wine, the Diet Coke, the single-malt Scotch, wait 45 minutes and blast these fuckers with every form of obnoxious multimedia known to man. Mind-shredding psychedelic light-

shows. War carnage projected on the walls. Screaming fuck-you punk-rock feedback. Techno at 290 beats per minute. Gangsta rap, bass pumped so loud they lose control of their bowels and soil that Armani. Fuck 'em, they can afford the cleaning bill. Let them get scared shitless by the rage and chaos rushing through their psychic dikes. Watch their evil minds pop like grease bubbles in a fire. If what you do comes back to you three times, these assholes would be dead before 0.5.

Then again, I might be unleashing a horde of yuppie Mansons on the city. These assholes are 10 times more coldblooded than the iciest crack dealer. They're waiting for Cazzo to come on like he's a rock 'n' roll star. But not one who scorches you into ecstasy. He's one who sells their shitstem of greed and fear to the gullible public. One who purveys their hepatitic brown piss like it's a fresh pint of Guinness. This is like a rock 'n' roll show for ugly people. Their souls have no alibi. There's more beauty in a broken-nosed street hooker, at least she's suffered for something, cared about something other than her own calculations. Actually most of these people are at least moderately good-looking. Defective surfaces don't get you far in corporate America. No 19thcentury potbellies here, these people work

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out. It's all part of the übermensch philosophy. We're Richer, More Powerful, and Better-Looking Than You.

The exceptions are the lower-level politicians, the ones who don't have to campaign on TV. Like Councilmember Pierdolicz, the biggest landlord shill in the city, he's a 400-pound backbencher from the area out by the airport. During the hearings on vacancy decontrol two weeks ago he was going on and on about how, "People have to take personal responsibility in this country. We can't expect property owners to subsidize individuals who aren't willing to earn adequate incomes. There's no free lunch."

Pierdolicz is opening himself up by talking about free lunches. The landlords have been buying him thirds and fourths. While he was speaking his elephant-gray suit jacket was gradually working up over his waistline and his pants slipping down below it, revealing a prodigious amount of butt cleavage to the protesters in the balcony. Thousands of people are gonna end up living six to a room if this bill passes, and the city's top tenant activists are all biting on their cheeks to keep from laughing. You take your consolation wherever you can find it.

Then little five-year-old Justice Dupree goes, "Mommy, that man's butt is showing," and everyone cracks up.

Her mother says "Hush, child," and Justice gets indignant, you know the way five-year-olds get when their moral order is challenged. "But Mommy, you always tell me not to let people see my booty."

And then her big brother goes. "Yo. Just say no to crack."

The committee passed the bill 6-3. Work my way to the front. I'm trying to get close enough to Cazzo to ask him about vacancy decontrol. The fucker's assiduously avoided taking any kind of public position on it for the last four months, dutifully insisting he's a friend to tenants and all the people of the city. There's at least \$100,000 in landlord money here tonight, or as my notes put it, ">100G LL\$." DA Rosen is on stage introducing Cazzo, praising him to the fullest. "And as I look into the future of our great city, is it not too much to wonder, is it not too much to hope that someday, sometime in the future that the road from City Hall might lead to Pennsylvania Avenue?"

Roars of applause. Jesus. This guy's tongue has snaked its way up through all 20 feet of Cazzo's small intestine. They bust gay bars for back-room fisting, what do they call this?

Cazzo goes on about the accomplishments of his administration. "We've reduced the welfare rolls by 40 percent. We've taught personal responsibility to a population enslaved by an ethic of getting something for nothing. We've taught them that work is the key to freedom." That's his applause line. It's arbeit mach frei in the original German. "We've restored respect for lawfully constituted authority. Our city is no longer cap-

tive to racial agitators and special interests who divide us." More applause. The only black people in sight are serving coffee and swabbing up spilled drinks.

"And I ask for your support tonight to complete what we have started, to bring our city into the 21st century and restore the glory it had in the past."

He gets a roar like he's Bruce
Springsteen coming out for an encore.
The painkillers are kicking in, but my
head still hurts. I'm gonna puke if I don't
get something in my stomach soon. That
would be good performance art, but it'd
detract from my mission. Cazzo's coming
offstage. I'm pushing with the crowd, trying to get next to him. It occurs that the
security goons might take my body language for a potential assassin. Well, I am. I
want to take the motherfucker down for
being a liar, a fascist prick, a self-righteous shill for the war of rich against poor.
I want to do it with words, with truth.

I hope my aim is true. I hope I'm a better shot than John Hinckley or Arthur Bremer. ©

Steven Wishnia is author of the punk-rock novel Exit 25 Utopia (The Imaginary Press). He was also the bass player in the False Prophets and guitarist in Iron Prostate. He lives in New York, works as a news editor at High Times, plays guitar in Gateria and bass in Hooverville, and is currently writing a book of travel stories. Steven will be doing a number of readings in the Midwest this fall—e-mail for details: swishnia@hightimes.com

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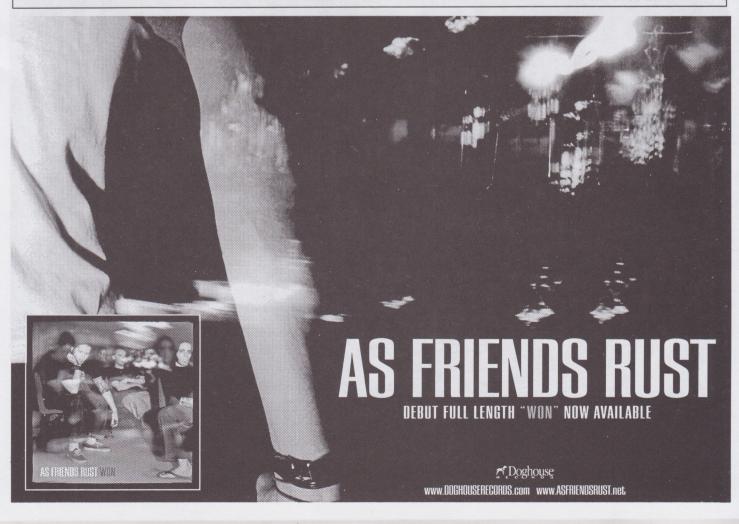
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# the DIY files

# **Making Polaroid Transfers**

By Daniel Sinker

ant a nice, unique way to use photographs in an artist book? Looking for something new to do with your photography? Need a new approach for graphics on a record design? Or maybe you just want a hyper-cool, hand-made way to document your life and friends. Well, one way that's fun, easy, and fairly cheap is by making Polaroid transfers.

A Polaroid transfer is a method of moving the photographic emulsion of a pull-apart Polaroid print onto a piece of watercolor paper. The picture picks up the grain of the paper you use, and the edges become slightly torn and soft. It's a really unique look and it's way easy to do, once you've got the equipment.

#### **Materials**

Obviously, the first thing you need is a Polaroid camera that can take pull-apart (type 669) Polaroid film. This is the trickiest part of the whole process. You see, outside of extremely expensive Polaroid camera backs for professional photographers and industrial-strength picture-ID cameras, Polaroid no longer makes cameras that use type 669 film.

So, how do you get a camera that isn't made anymore? It's actually quite simple. There are three sure-fire places to find the camera you need.

If you want to be sure that you're buying something that works and accepts the film that's made today, a used camera store is your best bet. I've seen old Polaroids on sale for \$10-\$30 at camera stores.

Next up are thrift stores. I see old Polaroids at almost every halfway-decent thrift store I go into. I got my trusty model 210 from a Village Thrift here in Chicago, and only paid \$5 for it. However, there is a risk quotient here, in that you can't be 100% sure the camera works.

Finally, you can always try an online auction to pick one up. Just checking E-bay right now shows at least 10 cameras that would work and not a single one is listed at over eight dollars!

So you've got a camera now. Finding the film is also a bit of a challenge. Your corner drug store probably isn't going to sell the film you need: Polaroid type 669 film. However, a halfway-decent camera store should sell it. One warning: it's pretty pricey. For some reason, it's only sold in a two-pack, and it costs close to \$30. If you don't live in a town with a good camera shop or if you just want to get a great deal, try some of the online photo stores. Calumet Photo (www.calumetphoto.com) sells a twin pack for only \$20!

The rest is easy. You're going to need:

· Watercolor paper. You can get this from any art supply store, as well as a lot of other places.



- A non-absorbent, hard, smooth surface. The books tell you to use a sheet of glass, but I just use the back of a cookie sheet.
- Something to press down and roll with. Again, the books say to use a roller or a brayer, but I just use the side of a coffee mug.
  - · A baking pan (or just use a cookie sheet with sides to it)
  - A sponge.
  - · Water.

#### Making your transfer

It goes without saying that this is the way I do Polaroid transfers. This isn't a road map, just a set of steps that you can rearrange how you want.

Also, if you've never done pull-apart photography before, you're probably going to want to practice a little bit with just making regular photos before you move onto doing transfers.

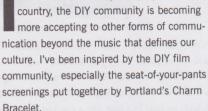
- First things first, you need to cut your watercolor paper to the size you want the final piece to be.
- Next, fill a baking pan (or your cookie sheet) with hot water, and submerge your paper in it. Leave it to soak for anywhere from one to five minutes. The paper needs to be saturated, but shouldn't be so wet that it turns to mush.
- · Lay out the paper on your smooth, hard surface. It should stick to the surface. Sponge any excess water off the surface of the paper.
- Go shoot your photo. A couple tips about that: Unless your camera has a flash (and most of the oldies don't), you're going to have to shoot outside, in pretty full sunlight. Also, do not pull the film out of the camera yet. That is key.
- $\cdot$  Go back to where your moist paper is waiting for you. Now is when you pull the film out of the camera.
- · Wait about IO seconds and then pull the photo from the emulsion. You'll see that the photo itself isn't fully developed. That's good.
- Take the emulsion side of the film—that's the greasy, gooey side—and place it face down on top of your piece of watercolor paper.
- · Immediately press it down using your roller (or your side of a coffee mug). Don't press too hard, or you'll move the film, which will cause everything to go to hell, image-wise.
- · Wait 60 seconds or so, and then lift the emulsion off of the paper. See your picture? Looks pretty cool, doesn't it!

Obviously, this is a process that takes a while to master. I've only been doing it for a little while, so I don't feel fully confident that every time I slap an emulsion down, what's going to come out is what I want. There are lots of variables at play that can affect your image: light, time, wetness, paper grain. Play around with them until you achieve the look that you really want. But mostly, have fun and good luck!

# ounk 101

# Charm Bracelet: DIY film screenings





primarily consisting of founder/frontman Brad

that have been putting on startlingly success-

According to Adkins, it really doesn't take

much to show a film, in fact, he manages to do

have a film projector, a personal computer, or a

full time job. Charm Bracelet is his life and he

makes it happen with very little resources. Almost every performance has sold out—people

have even been turned away at the door or

gamut from arty animation pieces to two min-

utes of tinfoil being crinkled up, Portlanders just

can't get enough of the interesting and perplex-

ing variety of films that Brad chooses to show.

How can you put your shows on for such

Brad: We put on a show that cost more than

a thousand dollars for \$120. Some people

have had to sit in the aisles. Running the

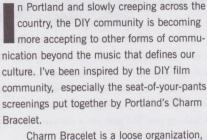
it with practically no money. He doesn't even

Adkins and an assorted range of volunteers

ful performances in a variety of spaces for

about a year.

little money?



Primarily name recognition and a showing to add to their resumes. These artists are all in the positions of trying to get grants and funding; if they've shown their film at 10 legitimate venues in a year, it would show that they are getting their work out.

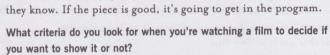


# And so as Charm Bracelet becomes more and more recognized . . .



I have been receiving the options for a lot of first-run stuff. On my last program, four of the pieces were sent to Ann Arbor, a very recognized film festival, at the same time they were sent to me. It's a benefit to us because now we have access to really great work. The filmmakers trust us because we're dealing with people directly. I have every e-mail exchange with the artists personally. They aren't sending it to this "blank" organization and wondering if it's being looked at. A lot of the programmers in other festivals have been doing what they've been doing for a long time and are prone to do lots of "favors." Even when people send full press kits, I still watch the film as if I don't have any idea whom that person who created the film is. I operate in a way that the





artists know that I'm going to look at their piece regardless of who



I show the films to my housemates, who don't have the experience, education or exposure to film that I do. I watch how they respond to the films. If they say "wow" or "I'm a little confused," I take that all into account. I also personally think about the techniques and ask, "Is this coming from such-and-such film school? Does it have that stamp on it?" If I get 15 pieces from the same school and they all have the same stamp; do I deal with them? There are definitely schools of thought in film.



# So you look for stuff that goes beyond these schools of thought?



We want the program to be full of lots of different modes of communication. I like to, in a night, combine films coming from a gutterpunk approach with films coming from a film-school approach with films coming from a professional artist approach. Charm Bracelet is not trying to stay a gutter-punk organization or a DIY organization. I want to expose the gutter-punks to the film school and vice versa.



Would you ever want to find some sort of definite regular venue or do you like having performances at different places all the time?



I think it's site specific. When David Wilson came with his film Magic City, I felt that it would really appeal to an all-ages DIY punk crowd. Kids who relate to the idea of creating something out of nothing. Of using limited resources. It's possible that it would appeal to a "high art" crowd, but the way it's constructed and presented, they might not get it. As it turned out, since I've been hopping from venue to



had a video projector and only asked us for the costs to replace the bulb: \$30. We spent \$55 on materials to make posters. I did all of the layout, design and distribution myself. The screen-printing of the posters was all donated time. ¶ Because I have a reputation with people in the film community, the filmmakers knew that the screen-

son, I was able to get them to send me their film without paying a "screening fee." Making my cost \$15 to ship their film back to them after the screening.

ing would definitely happen and would be

well advertised and promoted. For that rea-

What would you say the filmmakers get out of it?

venue and different social circles, half the crowd at that showing were people above 25. There were people with their children watching David Wilson's film about youth culture to a really good response. I wouldn't have contacted a larger arts organization and asked "can I do a screening of this DIY filmmaker who's touring in his van?" They couldn't quite understand that presentation in their environment. It's about making connections in all the communities. You present this work to an all-ages crowd and they realize that there are all these different modes of communication. There's all these different ways that you can construct a film. Then you move from that into an actual theater where you attract a theater crowd who say, "Wow, these are those DIY kids that I've been reading about for the last IO months." This allows them to come to an environment they are comfortable with. I really believe if an idea is clear and good, that as many people as possible should hear it. I just don't get into marginalizing these ideas for the sake of indie-credibility.

#### So where do you want to go with Charm Bracelet?

I want to put together a touring program of some of the really spectacular local work and make connections across the country in the same way that David Wilson did. I want to arrange screenings with the work of the people in their own communities, as well as use that rock show promoter model of bringing in a large touring national act as an opportunity for a local band to be put on the bill. The model for it all is to have this exchange of information. ¶ A lot of what I would like to accomplish is exposing the accessibility of so-called experimental work. Historically, experimental work has had an audience of 40 people per city. We haven't dropped below 80 people per screening. Much of that was due to the capacity of venue; we actually had to turn people away.

# Do you think that a tour would be successful. What kind of response have other filmmakers who have tried the touring model worked out?

Andrew Dickson got a really great response. He played into the rock community and everyone seemed to love his film. I'm trying to cross back and forth a little bit more; show in a rock venue, show in a legitimate theater, show in an art gallery, show in a cafe. What I would want to do wouldn't be limited to one scene.

# So how do you put on one of these events with no money, no car, and no computer?

A lot of it has to do with the fact that I spend six hours a day or more making phone calls, heading to the public library to take care of e-mails, finding people who will help me out. There are benefits to not owning any equipment, such as no overhead. At this point, we can't go into a venue unless they'll donate the space to us. They donate it because we're attracting crowds. We're good advertisers and provide word of mouth.

#### What does the venue get out of it?

They get exposure and associated with an exciting art event. On a Friday night when they typically close at 6 pm or at 9 pm 160 people show up in their environment who have never been to their business, they are happy with the event.

Your showing at Stumptown Coffee was the first time I had been there and discovered that they have the best coffee in Portland, making me want to return. Now, I will also associate the place with seeing the films. So, has it become easier and easier as time goes on? What are the arrangements that are made financially with the venue?

As word gets around it definitely gets easier. When I called the owner of the Hollywood Theater, he said he was glad to hear from me and definitely wanted to put on a showing. Typically, the venue will take somewhere between 30–50% of the door. Keeping in line with community building would require having these events in places that aren't normally associated with this sort of thing. In one space, we did the very first event that had ever been held in their space—it drew 220 people! That exchange of me being able to put on these events and using my resources to get people to their space creates a common goal achieved. This is better than approaching someone that doesn't need our help and we don't need theirs.

#### How do you approach promoting your events?

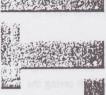
Coming to the business side of things, if you're selling something, you can't be too "knowing". You can't be selling something to people who don't have an entryway. If the language and methods of promotion you use are going beyond everybody, then you are only going to attract 40. The reason why everyone knows who Fugazi is because in my hometown of Calispell, Montana, you can buy all of the Fugazi records. In that town, there are only five of those types of bands that you can purchase records of. Whatever happened that made Fugazi say "We're not too good for Calispell, Montana; what we're making is worthwhile and it can communicate to everyone and should be available to kids everywhere" is what made them as successful as they are. ¶ I like to approach these presentations as if the audience consists of children. You don't need an education or trained background to appreciate what you're seeing. In the beginning, it might alienate people as they think, "Oh my god, I just watched a bunch of films that don't make any sense, but were interesting visually." Somehow this will manage to sustain itself through repetition. I decided long ago that I would never show Heavy Metal Parking Lot. It's a really big audience pleaser, but it doesn't need the exposure that I could give it. It's about communicating ideas. I don't want to mock any class or have a really populist worldview.

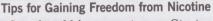
Check out http://www.charmbracelet.org/or email brad@charmbracelet.org for more info.

# in sickness and no wealth Quitting Smoking by Angel Page



Last issue I wrote about the dangers of smoking and the effects smoking has on your body. This issue I'm going to tell you about all the awesome benefits of quitting smoking, as well as give you tips for how to quit. Good luck!





- Set a date. Make a commitment. Give it a try—remember that its all right if you don't succeed at first, just keep trying. The only way you can lose is by ceasing to try.
- Commit to quit. Push away negative thoughts. Focus on how much better your life will be without cigarettes, not how hard quitting might be.
- To start out, practice going without cigarettes. Don't think of *never* smoking again. Instead, take it one day at a time. Tell yourself you won't smoke, then don't.
- Don't look at it as if you are giving up something. This makes it seem too much like a loss. What you are really doing is tossing something out of your life that has done you harm and doesn't belong there anymore. You are throwing away pure garbage. No longer are you going to allow your lungs to be a resting place for nicotine and tars.
- Look up the word "nicotine" in the dictionary and write down the definition in big letters: "A poisonous alkaloid used as an insecticide." Put it where you can see it daily.
- You can remember these four things by the word HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely Tired. If you feel you need a cigarette, check. Make sure you are not experiencing any of these.
- Remember that the discomfort you experience in the first two weeks will definitely come to an end and you will never have to go through it again as long as you stay a non-smoker.
- Drink lots of liquids to help flush the poison out of your system. Orange juice is good because smoking depletes the vitamin C content in our bodies.
- · Critique cigarette ads. Understand how

they try to make their brand appealing.

- Buy yourself a treat or do something special to celebrate.
- Go to a dentist and have your teeth cleaned to remove all the tobacco stains. See how nice your teeth look? Resolve to keep them that way!
- List things you'd like to buy for yourself or someone else. Estimate the cost in cigarette packs. In the days that follow, set aside the money you'd have spent on cigarettes. When you've saved enough, buy what you want.
- Know your triggers. Triggers are the everyday feelings and situations that spur urges to smoke, like watching TV, have a cup of coffee or feeling edgy or nervous. Identify them and try to minimize that situation, avoid if possible, or at least be aware of the possible urges you may feel.
- Keep your hand busy: doodle, do crosswords, do the dishes, give yourself a manicure, masturbate . . . you get the point.
- Find activities that make smoking difficult, impossible, or unnecessary. Garden, wash the car, rake leaves, walk your dog, play an instrument, etc...
- Keep you mouth feeling fresh and clean. Brush your teeth a few times during the day. Use mouthwash or breath freshener.
- Seek support from friends and family, smoking cessation groups offered at a local hospital, or health department.
- A smoking cessation counselor and/or your Doctor can tell you all about medications to help you curb your urges. In fact, a drug company by the name of Glaxo offers a patient assistance program. They will offer to help pay for the medication offered by their company, so instead of paying for the meds out of pocket (which can run you up to \$90 a month), they can offer it to you for \$5-10 bucks per month. Here's the catch, you have to have the forms filled out by a Smoking Cessation Counselor, and the forms require medical and income information. To get more information about this program, you can write PO BOX 52185, Phoenix, AZ 85072-9711, or call 1-800-722-9294, or visit their website at www.glaxowellcome.com/pap
- There are a couple of great websites that our Department recommends. A favorite is www.quitnet.org. This web site has a guide to help people through the quitting process, a pharmaceutical guide to the medications for quitting tobacco, a quitting calendar that you can personalize and add journal entries, a national directory that will connect you to local smoking cessation programs and chat rooms (to talk with others that are going through the same thing feelings you are). The website www.nicotine-anonymous.org is another great web site, this resembles the 12 step program for alcoholics anonymous, but instead deals with giving up tobacco. It has some good information. Check it out!

PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

## Possible Withdrawal Symptoms:

I've listed many of the symptoms that come with quitting smoking, what is causing them, and how to treat them. Note: These symptoms are temporary! Hang in there, you can do it!

- Increased coughing, dry throat, nasal drip (may last a few days).

  This is from the excess mucus and tar in the lungs being cleared out. Be glad your lungs are getting clean! Drink plenty of fluids; try cough drops.
- Constipation (may last I-2 weeks). This is due to decreased intestinal activity. Eat fiber or roughage foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and bran. Drink more water.
- Headache. The better circulation that comes from smoking sends more blood to the brain. Lie down and relax.
- Irritated or itchy scalp, hands and/or feet. This is a result of having better blood circulation to your extremities. Massage the area.
- Tremors, shaky. This comes from Nicotine withdrawal. Sit down. Tense and relax your muscles.
- Sweating. This is your body's way of getting rid of nicotine or from drinking more fluids. Take more showers.
- Increase need to urinate. Annoying though it may be, this is your body's way of getting rid of nicotine or from drinking more fluids. Go with it. Be glad your body is flushing out this poison. Drink more water.
- Mouth sores, bad taste, sore gums or tongue, dry tongue. This may be due to chemicals in cigarettes needed to counteract nicotine. Use mouthwash or oral antiseptics.
- Strong emotions. Nicotine no longer deadens your feelings. Accept feelings as natural. To keep them in control, pause, breathe deep, and relax. Look at specific emotions you used cigarettes to cope with and begin to change those patterns.
- Craving for a cigarette (may last 2-3 days, can happen occasionally for months or years). This comes from the withdrawal from nicotine, a strongly addictive drug. Wait out the urge. Urges last only a few minutes. Distract yourself. Exercise; go for a walk around the block.
- Irritable, nervous, anxious, grumpy (may last 2-3 weeks). This comes from your body's loss of nicotine, losing the crutch of cigarettes. Take it easy. Avoid stressful situations. Warn those around you. Get enough rest. Do whatever is relaxing for you. Exercise.
- Unable to concentrate, less efficient, impaired speech, lack of coordination, feeling spaced out or in a fog (may last a few weeks). Caused by your withdrawal from carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas) and nicotine. Breathe deeply. Take a walk. Be careful using equipment or driving. Take time off, if necessary. Don't expect too much of yourself- especially the first three days after quitting.
- Lightheaded, dizzy, feeling over-stimulated (may last I-2 days). It's a result of having more oxygen in your blood and less carbon monoxide. Sit down. Relax.
- Sleepy, weak, no energy (may last 2-4 weeks). You've changed your daily routine, and so your body may need less sleep. Use more energy during the day. Relax before bed with deep muscle relaxation and a warm bath. Enjoy the extra hours you aren't sleeping. Avoid caffeine after 6 pm.
- Hunger (may last up to several weeks). Nicotine artificially suppresses appetite. Recognize these feelings, may not be due to hunger. Don't eat more (except for low-calorie snacks like carrot sticks). Exercise. Drink water.

## Benefits of Smoking Cessation:

20 MINUTES AFTER QUITTING:

- Blood pressure drops to normal.
- Pulse Rate drops to normal.
- Temperature of hands and feet increase to normal.
- 8 Hours After Quitting:
- Carbon monoxide level in blood drops to normal.
- Oxygen level in blood increases to normal.
- 24 Hours After Quitting:
- · Chances of heart attack decrease.

## 48 Hours After Quitting:

- Nerve endings start to re-grow.
- Ability to smell and taste is enhanced.

#### 72 HOURS AFTER QUITTING:

- Bronchial tubes relax; lung capacity increases.
- 2 WEEKS 3 MONTHS AFTER QUITTING:
- Circulation improves.
- Walking becomes easier.
- Lung Function increases up to 30 percent.

#### 1-9 MONTHS AFTER QUITTING:

- Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath decrease.
- Cilia regain normal function in lungs, increasing ability to handle mucus, clean lungs, and reduce infection.
- Overall energy increase.
- I YEAR AFTER QUITTING:
- Excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker.

#### 5 YEARS AFTER QUITTING:

• Stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker

### 5-15 YEARS AFTER QUITTING.

• Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, and esophagus is half that of a smoker.

### 10 YEARS AFTER SMOKING:

- Lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker.
- Pre-cancerous cells are replaced.
- Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidneys, and pancreas decrease.

## 15 YEARS AFTER QUITTING:

· Risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker.

I am fortunate enough to work in a smoking cessation department, so I had access to a lot of great information, and a special thanks to my coworker Karen McGettigan, for supplying me with additional tips as well. I hope that you found this information helpful. I wish you all luck! 0

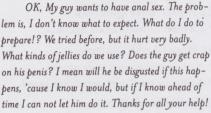
Drop an e-mail to: makotorecordings@yahoo.com. Rather send real mail? Mail to: Makoto Recordings PO Box 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005. Thank you!

#### Sources

Borgess Smoking Cessation Department
7 steps by American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
Michigan Department of Community Health
The American Legacy

# early to be by Sex Lady Searah

Dear Sex Lady—



Signed, Jessie

Jessie,



Anal sex can be a lot of fun if both people are into it. However, it's not easy to go from having nothing up your ass to taking a whole penis in there. I highly recommend that before you get right to it that you spend some time either play-

recommend that before you get right to it that you spend some time either playing with your butthole alone or having your partner do it for you. You might even find that a finger in your ass is all you really want or need (a tip for the ladies: many guys love a finger in their butt while you are blowing or fucking them. Give it a try some time. And before you ask, no, it doesn't mean they are gay). So maybe start out by having your partner finger you in the ass for a while, staring with one finger and working up to two fingers. You really shouldn't try putting a dick in your ass until you like having at least two well-lubed fingers in your butt. You might also want to try a butt plug that is smaller then your honey's dick. Some companies even make an ass training kit with several sizes so you can work up from little to big. Vixen Creations (available at finer sex

Once you feel like you're physically ready for anal sex, there's not really much you need to do to prepare. Some people choose to prepare by giving themselves an enema (anal douche). An enema will make your ass pretty freakin' clean, but for most butt play, that really

shops) makes a fabulous pink sparkly butt

plug that I just love. It's so cute!

isn't necessary. Honestly, a good bowel movement and thorough shower will get you nice and tidy and ready for hot butt sex. As for supplies, you need to get some condoms and good lube. I cannot stress enough how important the lube is. You should not be having anal sex without some kind of lube. While your anus is able to stretch pretty well, it is very delicate and needs to be protected. As soon as you get a little rip or tear (from too much friction) you are opening yourself up to catching diseases or causing an infection. You can get a decent lube at the drug store (Astroglide or KY Jelly), but I recommend getting something thicker like Probe Classic or Maximus. These lubes are specifically designed for things like anal sex and fisting (we'll get to that in a later column) and can be purchased at a sex shop or online. Just be sure that whatever you are using doesn't have any petroleum, Because that will eat away at the condom (that means no Vaseline!)

About the crap on your boyfriend's dick. Yeah, It can happen. There is crap in your ass and sometimes a little bit will get on whatever is going up there. But in my experience, it really doesn't happen all that much. And if you're using condoms, it really shouldn't be a big deal. Assuming there is nothing wacky happening in your digestive tract, It's not likely his dick is going to come out slathered in brown goo. OK?

Now when you're about to take a dick (or plug or finger) in your butt, you've got to be relaxed. If you tense up at all, it is going to make the whole experience more painful and unpleasant. You have to want that dick up your butt and you can't be all freaked about how much it's going to hurt or it will hurt. Like Hell. And that's just not what sex is all about. You must make sure that after a dick (or finger or toy) has been in your ass, you don't go stick it back in your cunt. That is a sure-fire way to get a nasty infection. You can go from front to back door, but never the other way around.

To be honest some people, no matter how hard they try, can never really get a whole dick up their ass comfortably. Either they can't relax enough or their guy's piece is just to damn big. If that happens to you, you shouldn't let it discourage you from enjoying your ass to it's fullest potential! Enjoy finger fucking and butt plugs and if you're feeling really hot, a good ass lickin' can be a wonderful thing.

HEY EVERYONE: I've just opened my own sex store here in Chicago!! It's the cumination of a lot of dreaming and planning, and I'm very excited about it. It's called—what else—Early to Bed—and it's located at 5232 N. Sheridan. That's right between Foster and Berwyn—right off Lake Shore Drive and about three blocks from the Berwyn El. Please stop by and say hello.

Finally, I'm always here to answer your questions: diysex@punkplanet.com

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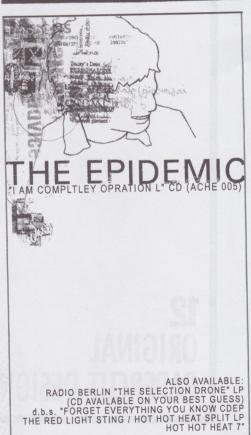
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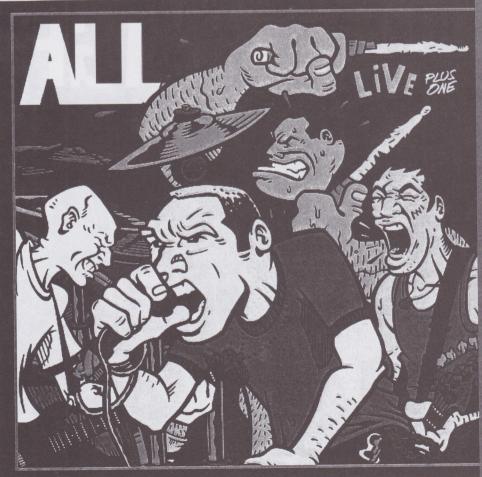


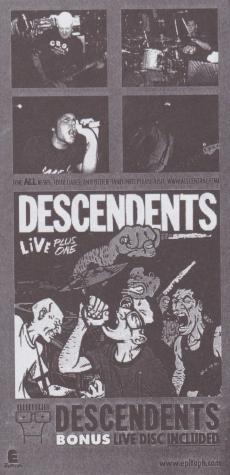
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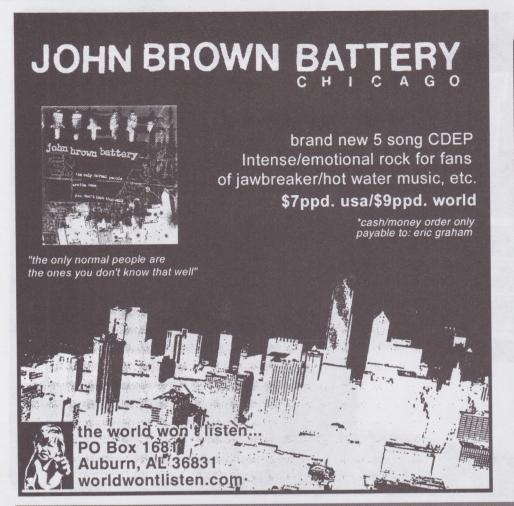
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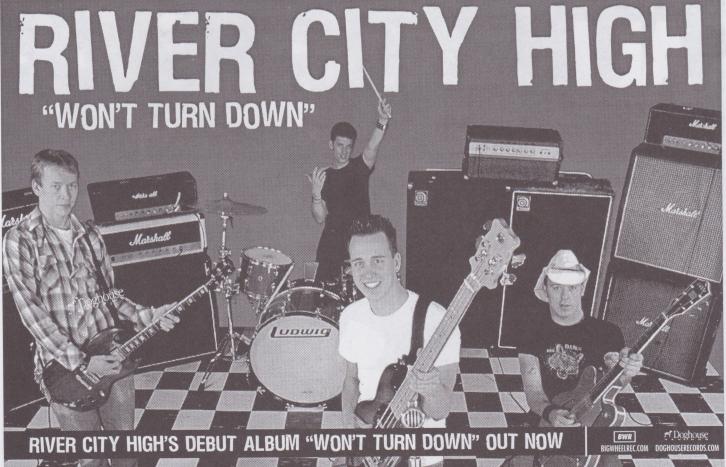
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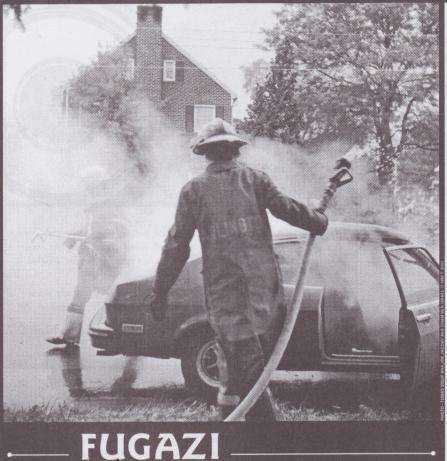












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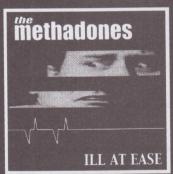
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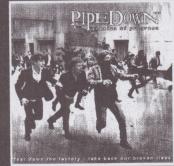
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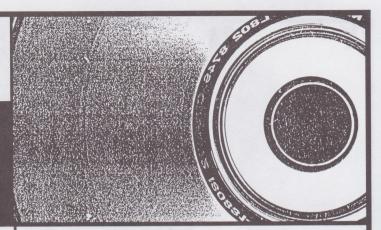
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# PLASTIC



Agent 51 - Just Keep Runnin', CD Wow this album was really long! There were twenty songs. Maybe I have a short attention span, but after about the fifth one I totally lost interest. The songs were really popish and sugary sweet. They had this wanna be sensitive thing going. Some of the songs sounded like a cross between green day and rancid. (AA) Adeline Records, 5337 College Ave., #318, Oakland, CA 94618

§ American Nightmare - Background Music, CD The songs on this record were filled with unbridled power and aggression combined with riveting lyrics. The bands energy was absolutely mesmerizing. Their bone crushing rhythms, screaming vocals, and gang choruses were combined in the perfect proportions to create a hardcore band that you should keep your eye on. (AA)

Equal Vision Records P.O. Box 14 Hudson, NY 12534

Anti-Flag – Underground Network, CD A course requirement for Intro To Punk. Catchy pop punk tunes, cute "punk" looking dudes, political slogans and songs about fucking shit up. Not bad, but unnecessary for anyone over 19. Cuz we all we wanna do is drink beer, get laid and listen to retro rock! (NS)

Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

The Applicators - What's Your Excuse, CD I was pretty impressed with this all female band's debut album. They have a very cool no nonsense, tough, straight to the point old school style. There's a really good cover of Sleater-Kinney's "Good Things," and the Dead Milkmen's "Violent School." (AA)

The Atari Star – shrp knf cts mtns, CD Indie rock has a new face and it's these guys. It's not my cup of tea but I can't bag on this either. It's not whiney, it's well thought music, decent lyrics, it has it all. Acoustic pianos, violins, guitars, drums, catchy vocals, the Atari Star is worth checking out for those of you who dig bands similar to Guided BV, Modest Mouse or Belle and Sebastian. (DM)

Johan's Face Records, PO Box479164, Chicago, IL 60647

Bad Astronaut/Armchair Martian—split, CDEP If Jay Farrar of Son Volt started a punkish rock band, you'd have Armchair Martian. Bad Astronaut features of Joey from Lagwagon—it's a slower, moodier, instrumentally varied version of Lagwagon. Not bad.

(KR) Owned & Operated Recordings, PO Box 36, Fort Collins, CO 80522

The Bananas – A Slippery Subject, CD Spastic, jangley punk rock that's fast, loud and a good time if you're in the mood. Kind of gets your toes a tappin'. Really good driving music if that means anything. Go Sac'. (DM) Plan-It-X Records (No info available)

Ben Davis - The Hushed Patters of Relief, CD Dark and moody pianoheavy songs by an ex-member of Milemarker (PP columnist Al Burian's band). (AE)

Lovitt Records, P.O Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210

Biddy Biddy Biddy – Logic Makes US Look Good, CD It sure does. It sure does...Biddy Biddy Biddy uses pseudo-smart design. This means lots of cryptic computer-like talk meant to make you feel alienated...and make them feel like they are something more than a good indie-rock band (with emphasis on rock, ...and even more emphasis on DC rock) (RE) Atarms Mechanics, www.atarmsmechanics.com

Bitch and Animal - Eternally Hard, CD I don't give a fuck if this is sex positive. This is the same pretentious café rock, granola eating, bongo drum shit that this genre professes not to be. Sure, "Passports" is a dope ukulele (That's right motherfucker, a uku-fucking-lele) driven ballad and "Prayer to the Sparkly Queen Areola" is a tongue in cheek call to arms, but I can't take this record enough to get to the conclusion. Jesus Christ, "Ganja" is fucking turning my stomach over quicker than a shot of gin. The feminist struggle for accurate and positive representation within music, as well as culture in general, is a battle cry that is picked up by too few, so I gotta' give Bitch and Animal props, but "Eternally Hard" can't hold my attention musically. Sorry. (GS) Righteous Babe Records, PO Box 95, Ellicott Station Buffalo, NY 14205

Bonny Billy—More Revery, CDEP A collection of six cover songs from the likes of PJ Harvey to Tim McGraw but with an insurgent country flavor. Pleasant enough but I don't see this making it into my heavy rotation. (KR)

Temporary Residence Limited, PO Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203

Breaker Breaker—Demo y2x1, 7" Fast punk that's hard core without the metal tendencies associated with that. Nothing interesting, except one of the songs is called "P.S. Fuck You." (KR)

Bridge Nine Records, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052

9 The Buff Medways - 4 song, 7" Wild Billy Childish and the Friends of

About our new review section: We still review all the records we recieve, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to high-light. Those reviews are marked with an ear icon, which signifies that they deserved another listen... or something like that. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. That also doesn't mean that all the ear-marked reviews are positive, just that a reviewer had something to say about them. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to, which should give you, the reader, a better feel for what that reviewer's got going on—which in turn allows you to make a more informed decision about whether or not you agree with said reviewer. Finally, If a reviewer doesn't like your record, that doesn't mean that it's totally terrible or anything like that. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congradulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

the Buff Medway Fanciers' Association is the full title of the band. Basically, this is the prolific Billy Childish's new band and this is their second or third single. The first release released was two covers of Jimi Hendrix, not an expected pick from mister Billy B. Childish. This band is definitely more rock than anything he has done; Milkshakes, Thee Headcoats/Headcoatees, Mighty Caesars, Pop Rivets, etc. I am not sure what I think yet of them, though it was nice for a change of pace. This single features for originals that rock along and are very worth the price of admission. Can't wait to see the full length coming soon. (EA) Smartguy Records 3288 21st Street, PMB #32 San Francisco, CA 94110

By All Means – End the Beginning, CD Heavy and fast bass-heavy hard-core with metal tendencies. I've heard it before – with a little bit of hip-hop mixed into it, it might start to sound like Korn or Limp Bizkit at their hardest.

Building Records, 21872 Military Road, Mosman NSW, Australia 2088

Christiana - Hydrofield of Myth, CD Fast poppy rock with clean guitars and vocals that sound bored or like they'd rather be doing something else, kind of like My Bloody Valentine. A seeming lack of energy or feeling for such fast music though. 19 songs: they're short and all more or less sound the same. (BJM)

High School Champion, PO Box 86003-670, Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M6G 1L0

Christiansen – Emphasizing Function Over Design, CD I'm coining it here, folks. Cringe Core. Emo rock bands that are already barely tolerable on the surface, but read the lyrics and you want to rip your eyeballs out and use them as earplugs. Stop concentrating so hard in your Poetry IOI class and concentrate more on the pretty girls. (NS) Eulogy Records, P.O. Box 8692, Coral Springs, FL

The Chronics - Soulshaker, CD Once I saw song titles like "Dragster Man" and "Highway Woman", I thought for sure that this was going to suck in a fifth rate Devil Dogs kind of way. Yeah know, all kinds of boring talk about "chicks" all the while the band "rocks out". Although that is a fair description of The Chronics, they at least had the nerve to filter all of their songs through a healthy dose of American RnB. Drip in some organ, get a good groove going and let the vocalist do a decent souled out version of David JoHansen. What is it with this new soul influence? Are the Bellrays that influential? Anyhow, this was a pleasant treat that came off a lot less macho than I expected. So kids...if you ever feel like shaking your ass to some tunes, take off that backpack, toss that Rainer Maria, and get The Chronics. No, it is not affiliated with Dr. Dre. (AS)

Bad Afro Records, Poste Restante, Frederiksberg Alle 6, DK -12820 Frederiksberg C, Denmark

Chris Ware Band - Soul Shakedown, CD At last, a recording with some honest energy. I wouldn't say this record is great, but it is definitely good. The rock and roll sound and off-key vocals set this release off from everything else I've reviewed this issue. The tambourine and eighth-note piano parts show a good attention to detail as well. This is a recording that sounds like these guys had fun while doing it. And did I mention that for all its imperfections, this stuff actually has soul? (BJM) Fan Attic Records, PO Box 391494, Cambridge MA 02139

Cinecyde – Magnetic Attraction, Hypnotic Repulsion, CD Snotty, twangy rock 'n' roll from this foursome of older-something punks. Their sound is somewhat similar to late Social Distortion in parts. (RE) Tremor Records, 403 Forest, Royal Oak, MI 48067

Civic Minded Five - Trackin' the Bacon Train, CD Lo-fi, poorly-recorded punk by what sounds like a bunch of kids. Some of it is screamy, some of it makes painful attempts at being melodic. This should probably be three songs on a seven inch, instead of eleven on a CD. I dig their name,

though, despite that there appear to be only four of them. (BJM) Manatee Records, 2676 El Camino Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89146

The Common Cold – S/T, CD Pretty (mostly) instrumental music from this band with funny looking mono-color covers. HA! I said mono, and this band is called The Common Cold. Get it? Whoa! (RE) www.yourcommoncold.com

9 Coquettish - Total Pops Madness, CD Yokohama and Asian Man bring us Japan's answer to Action Patrol. This is fast and screamed and despite the title it isn't "total pops," but just "somewhat pops." Actually, this is all over the map fast as hell melodic madness played by hyper Japanese youth. There are slight ska influences, but don't let that be a turnoff-- this is dynamic fun with great broken English lyrics like "I noticed that you chase me; I chased you before I notice; If my stand is changing; I stand on yhe [sic] same place in my heart; in your every busy days; if you would think about me a little; more than the isstant [sic] of your heart; deep and deeper; I wanna care of you." If you're not too PC to admit that you really love the aesthetic of Japanese punk bands singing in broken English, you'll just go nuts over this band. Sure, there have been a lot of really good bands with pop influences coming out of Japan lately like Thug Murder and Crispy Nuts. But Coquettish is faster than either of those bands. If you like fast poppy punk, you can't go wrong here. (AE) Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

David Singer – The Cost Of Living, CD Deep Elm refers to Dave as a cross between Beck and Elliott Smith. I'm thinking a poor impersonation Ben Folds Five and Jets to Brazil, kinda'. Whatever... check it out if you want. (DM)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939 Charlotte, NC 28236

Dianogah - Hannibal, 7" Recorded by Steve Albini, at least these instrumentals sounds good. The first consists of a bass, a guitar, and a drummer, and the second is two bases and a drummer. One bass does the low-end, rhythmic stuff, and the guitar (on the first track) and the other bass (on the second track) other does the high-end melodies. Not terribly exciting, but perhaps one of the more original things I have received for this issue. (BJM)

Southern Records, PO Box 577375, Chicago IL 60657

9 The Dickies - All This and Puppet Stew, CD The Dickies are an American institution. I've never met anyone who didn't fall under the spell of their ridiculous take on the whole punk rock experience. In a time, when everyone else was snarling at the world, they mad us smirk, laugh, and jump around like a bunch of crazed fools. Now these forty somethings are back at again. This is a another decent collection of fun that is only marred by the generic big Gibson/Marshall guitar attack and the fact that Leonard seems to do most of the backup vocals himself. But this has enough classic tunes, "My Pop The Cop", "It's Huge", and "Sobriety" to hook me and get me excited about the next time that they roll their pick up band back through town. Ie. they're amazing live. And so, as Leonard said last time they came through town, "please buy the record because I would look stupid working at McDonald's". Everyone will be pleased that it's not fittingly entitled, "Third Coming"! (AS)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

Dirt Bike Annie – Superscope, 7" Four song single from pop favorites, Dirt Bike Annie. With a half dozen or so singles and a full length or two. Dirt Bike Annie have fine tuned their sound to keep their fans interested. Mutant Pop fans apply here. (EA)
Break-Up! Records PO Box 15372 Columbus, OH 43215

DMS - S/T, CD It says in the liner notes, "real-time drums, step-time

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andrea Anders (AA)

CAUSE FOR ALARM. This band changed my life forever! Before I started to get into punk I really struggled to find my element. In junior high I was considered a "grunge", which basically meant that I just looked a lot different from everyone else. Then people started to describe me as "the skinny skater type." I was never too big into the grunge thing, and the only thing I can do on skates is skate in a straight line. I know this sounds totally melodramatic and all, but as soon as I herd CFA I knew I found what I was missing. Their style was just so fast and hard and their lyrics really got into my head. Punk has truly brought me a greater sense of unity. I'm still a bit of a weirdo, but now I guess I'm among friends.

Listening to: Ani Difranco, The Clash, Pantera, Dead Boys, Integrity

programming, some-times trumpet." As far as I can tell, this is one guy who programs keyboard/synth/electronic music and plays a real drum kit with it, with a real trumpet thrown in here and there. It is all instrumental. There is some variety here, and the songs remind me of different move sound tracks. One sounds like a bastardized version of the theme from Beverly Hills Cop. (BJM)

Arborvitae Records, PO Box 857, Champaign, IL 61824

The Dropscience – Experimenting With Contrast, CD Musical discord (not the label) and dissidence in that way the Public Image LTD once brought to the kids. The world of art punk and severe indie rock collide to bring the goods. At times a bit droning, but not a bad at all. Could be the next Radiohead type of band with a touch of Fugazi. Who knows? (DM)

Happy Couples Never Last, PO Box36997, Indianapolis, IN 46236-0997

Early Humans, CD Disjointed emocore that switches all over the place from heavy parts to more experimental light parts. Spazz meets Fugazi? (AS) Wantage USA, PO Box 8681, Missoula, MT 59807-8681

Encroach - Life in the Quicksand, CD First-person POV. review: we suck, we sound like Earth Crisis, but we're from the Twin Cities instead of Syracuse. Actually, this isn't bad and plays like an improved version of Earth Crisis. (AE)

Medical Records, PO Box 4981, Irvine, CA 92616

9 The Evaporators - Honk the Horn, 7" Singles are often hard to write much about, unless they are groundbreaking. Honestly, this isn't one of those singles, but rather a seven inch that is worth your time. The Evaporators could be called the Canadian version of Boris the Sprinkler, but truth be told I believe as far as bands go around they are older. That aside you do understand that they are a complete goofball band lead by none other than Nardwaur the Human Serviette. If you have never heard or read his interviews then I suggest you go directly to www.nardwaur.com and leave aside a few hours. Just like his personality, The Evaporators are a "love em' or hate em'" kind of group. This single's lead track, "Touch Wood" is a frantic, seemingly pitch shifted, tune about touching "wood." Which in its own right seems rather dumb, but followed by an interview of Tommy Lee and discussing his "wood" from the Pamela Anderson video it seems even dumber. Definitely a single worth your time for a pop punk / garage punk cross genre sort of thing. (EA)

Mint Records PO Box 3613 Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6

\*The Facet – Adult Comedy, CD A while back, Planes Mistaken for Stars played here with this rad skate-rock band The Messyhairs and they mentioned a bunch of other awesome Colorado bands – and I wish I could find the list that I wrote them down on to see if The Facet was on there because this record if awesome. From the get-go the band does not disappoint – melodic hardcore that reminds me a little of older Hot Water Music but not as rough or manly – and with much more of a fast, punk feel (as opposed to the easier, emo route they could have

gone). Well-sung vocals that are sung-screamed over catchy guitar parts. The Facet is not breaking any new ground with the music they are playing but they do it very well. I hope they stick it out and continue to play because this record should be bigger than it is. (RE)

Not Bad Records, PO Box 2014, Arvada, CO 80001

Federation X – American Folk Horror, CD I really am not sure what Estrus see in this band. Very cock-rock, what am I missing? (EA) Estrus Records

Federation X / Fleshies- split, 7" Fed X has a noisy upbeat serious style of indie rock that is similar to Spencer and Sonic Youth. The Fleshies rock out with their cocks out. Noisy, in your face, and cannot be stopped. 'Nuf said. Definitely the Fleshies are stronger side of the split but both bands are worth checking out. (DM)

Molasses Manifesto, 505 32nd St #107, PMB 190, Bellingham, WA 98225

P Felonious—The List, CD Unbeknown to most of America, the Bay Area has produced some of the most talented hip-hop in the last few years, an interesting fact for a city that has lost most of its rehearsal spaces and an unspoken avoidance by clubs in putting on hip-hop shows. This is no click track, studio produced hip-hop. Like the Roots, Felonious is a live hip-hop group. Four emcees, a drummer, keyboardist and bassist, Felonious is one of the best groups I've ever seen live. Their first EP didn't capture their sound as fully as "The List" does. The record flows well, highlighting Infinitie and Soulati's amazing beatbox skills, doing human sampling and voice skratching that you'll swear was only capable by a machine. The three part harmony of "Ethics" is something anyone would listen to in awe and tracks like "Attain," ""Ethics," and "Set it in Motion" are some of the sickest tunes I've heard in a while—bar none. Not to fear, this record and the scene they've helped to create is completely DIY. (GS)

Wishbone Entertainment, 3739 Balboa #201, San Francisco, CA 94121

\*Fields Of Fire – Keep It Alive, CD If you've read my reviews the term skate punk has come up from time to time. Sometimes it's just the sound that reminds me of days past, but these kids are for real. The return of punk that touches upon smooth, melodic and pop while not concentrating on any one aspect and truly rocking out has come home again. and reminiscent of days past of bands like McRad, GB, B'last, Uniform Choice but keeping it fresh and doing their own thing. Angry So. Cal HC with shouted vocals over tight cranking guitars and a pounding and melodic rhythm section makes this an exciting release to listen to. With messages of non-conformity, being true and staying young is truly icing on the cake. (DM)

Phyte Records, PO Box 990363, Washington, DC 20090

The Flash Express – Who Stole The Soul?, 7" This is some kick ass mixing of punk and some dirty soul music. This is beautiful in so many ways with its grit, piss and vinegar from the vocal attack, crunchy guitars and pounding rhythm section. Look out John Spencer. (DM)
Revenge Records 5835 Harold Wy. #203, Hollywood, CA 90028

# pp46

#### **REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS)**

In the early to mid nineties, England had some kind of punk rock resurgence (I forget what the press called it) that seemed to go pretty much unnoticed in the land of Green Day and Nirvana. S\*M\*A\*S\*H is the only band from this movement that I found to be worth getting excited about. They're just so crazy, fucked up and neurotic sounding. Catchy bass driven buzz bombs of alt punk. All loosely played as on the edge of self destruction. Their songs just seemed to hit home with me. Bizarre lyrics presented in a falling apart at the seems manner beckon multiple listens. There are so many gems in their catalog, "Drugs Again", "Real Surreal", "Altruism", etc. But my favorite is "Lady Love Your Cunt" that I still can't decide if it's a male penned ode to greatness of women/feminism or just another good time boys looking for a piece song. I nearly cry every time I see their stuff in the cheapo bin at the record store. Their brand of incomparable punk rock will hopefully move you the same way that it still does me today. Don't know what happened to them? Probably suicidally overdosed on drugs and love.

Lately some of my favorite things come in boxes: Echo and The Bunnymen, Joy Division, and Faust.

Fleshies/Phantom Limbs, split 7' One original and one cover of each other for a total of four songs. Fleshies more straightforward good time punk while the Limbs do the more experimental goth organ thing. Fun. (AS)

S.P.A.M Records, PO Box 21588, El Sobrante, CA 94820-1588

Fly Everywhere—S/T, 7" This is what people who hate emo think of when they think of emo. Slow, light on the distortion with bad vocals, similar to Mineral. (KR)

Able Records, 308 S. Prairie St., Bloomington, IL 61701

Fly Everywhere/Stepleader—split 7" Dear God. Someone actually wrote a song called "Seeing is Bereaving." Ergo, a two-sided attack of bad emo trying to be Mineral & Christie Front Drive but not making it. (KR) Able Records, 308 S. Prairie St., Bloomington, IL 61701 and Sun Sea Sky Productions, 307 W. Lake Drive, Random Lake, WI 53075

Forstella Ford / The Assistant, 7" The Ass't reminds me of that band Ashes (HC) mixed with Coalesce. Very moving and rocking to sporadic/ spastic screamo metal core, AKA awesome. F.F. plays a similar style of music with the screaming, and the riffs, but have these nice melodic and lulling breakdowns that build back up into some raging HC! If you enjoy the style this split is heavily recommended. (DM) Boxcar Records, PO Box 1141, Melbourne, FL 32902-11411

The Generators—Tyranny, CD Ex-Schleprock, reminiscent of Social D and Rancid's first record. Terrible, let's-tell-a-story-about-tortured-souls lyrics, but this is full of catchy choruses & surprising hooks. (KR) TKO Records 4104 24th St., #103, San Francisco, CA 94117

The Goddamn Deluge – S/T, 7" A cool five song single from this defunct Gainesville, FL band. It's good old-style heavy-to-slow emo-hardcore with alternating heavy and clean guitar parts, multiple singing parts and lots of build-ups. Cool single. (RE)
Hot Sauce, PO Box 13161, Gainesville, FL 32604

9 Good Clean Fun – Straight Outta Hardcore, CD I don't own any previous Good Clean Fun records, but I've seen them live a couple times and their shows are always pretty energetic and entertaining. If you didn't know, Good Clean Fun belongs to the short lineage of comedy hardcore bands, such as Crucial Youth or Floorpunch. With songs like "The Ice Cream Man Cometh" and "Last Night I Dreamt That An Emo Kid Loved Me" you can see that this isn't exactly Earth Crisis (whose members now play in an Afro Cuban combo). In "Today Was A Positive Day" they give Ice Cube's classic the hardcore treatment with sample lyrics, "Everyone dancing and no one got hurt, and even the tough guy left wearing his shirt." And the layout with the NWA parody is pretty good. Some people dismiss these guys as a joke band, but they do actually deal with some serious topics on this album. And even if the joke isn't funny (which it mostly is) at least they're trying to keep hard-

core fun. I don't see you at the Improv, chuckles! (NS) Phyte Records, P.O. Box 90363, Washington, DC 20090

Grade—Headfirst Straight to Hell, CD The artwork for this CD looks like it belongs on a Skinny Puppy record, and the title had me thinking the worst. It's surprisingly melodic with aggressively sung/screamed vocals that help keep an edge. Typical of the new emerging Victory sound, it's inconsistent but good. (KR)

PO Box 146546, Chicago, IL 60614

\*Guyana Punch Line – Youth for Smashism, 7" G.P.L. features members of the great hardcore bands Inhumanity and Antischism and it definitely shows. Fast, catchy intense hardcore with great build-ups and great lyrics dealing with personal issues, their semi-serious / semi-humorous "smashism" ideology, and world-politics. It's a damn fine thing when a band can be this good, do it with a sense of humor and still manage to be very serious. Guyana Punch Line has two full-lengths out and they are both worth getting, as is this. (RE)

Coalition Records, Hugo de Grootstraat 25, 2518 Eb Den Haag, The Netherlands

Hacksaw/Mercury The Winged Messenger – Split 7" Hacksaw moves on from their Swiz rock sound and moves farther up the rock scale to now resemble later Gang Green or Poison Idea. I think the singer needs to step it up a notch though to keep in line with the music. Mercury does one instrumental, sounding somewhere between late 80's metal and hard rock. From the picture, I guess there are 3 guitarists. 2 rockin' bands, 2 rockin' songs. Good, but I think both bands could rock a little harder. (NS)

www.globalsymphonic.com

The HellacopterS/The Flaming Sideburns, split CD More souled out punk rock and roll. Three by each. Good, fun time. The Hellacopters at least know that if you need good cover material, you go Motown. Two Smokey covers here. (AS)

Bad Afro Records, Poste Restante, Frederiksberg Alle 6, DK -12820 Frederiksberg C, Denmark

The Hellions - S/T, CD M.O.D. was supposed to play here a few weeks ago, but cancelled. More embarrassing than the fact that I was planning to attend is the fact that I was absolutely fucking crushed when I got wind that the show wasn't happening. Now I get the debut full-length of Dallas' Hellions and I'm reminded of the tragic show cancellation all over again. This sounds just like M.O.D.'s third album, a sound you just don't find much these days. Gwar's bassist is in this, so some big \$ are behind the production but it's done in good taste, with very few frills. These guys obviously needed to prove to someone that they can still play straight hardcore, and the result ended up damn listenable. There's even a cover of Black Flag's "Rise Above" that manages to work. I like the term "mall-ternative," which is used in the lyrics. I'm gonna steal it and use it in a Punk Planet review sometime, but not this

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE)

NYC and DC are blowing up as I write this, but all I can do is listen to THE BRUISERS. Most people think the Dropkick Murphys were way better before The Bruisers' Al Barr became their singer, but I firmly disagree. The only downside to Barr's becoming the DKM singer is that The Bruisers broke up. As with Iron Cross and The Anti-Heroes, most U.S. punks heard The Bruisers before hearing any of the famous UK Oi bands. "The Authorized Bruisers: 1988-1994" showcases this brilliant band by compiling six full releases onto one indispensable 28-track CD. The Bruisers are a very different-sounding band. They have an almost monotone simplicity that's so bass heavy and driven that you can't help but raise your fist and shout along to apolitical classics like "Intimidation," "21 Years," and my personal favorite, "We Will Survive." Sadly, The Bruisers hit their heyday when Oi wasn't as accepted as it is today and were really only big regionally in New England. Not having reaped any of the benefits of the amazing Oi revival that's been sweeping the U.S. in the last 4 or 5 years, perhaps the band will reform sometime soon now that Barr's so well known. Let's fucking hope so!

Besides The Bruisers, I've also been listening to the new DS-I3 on a faster note and The Gore Gore Girls LP on a more rock 'n' roll note. I've also been watching a ton of movies and must recommend the punk as fuck French flick Baise-Moi, which sets its hardcore sex and violence to a sound-track of punk and hardcore.

one. This band is the only band this issue that would work well both at a bar show and as an opener at some big show for the youth. (AE) Hello Records, www.hellorecords.com

9 Henry Fiat's Open Sore – Makes Your Cock Big, 7" This opens with a relentless guitar solo that never lets up. These Swedes have the BIGGEST sound and play punk rock in a way that will get you up and dancing fast and furious. The energy displayed here is incredible and the manic pace will definitely catch your attention. You can't compete with lyrics like: NO ESCAPE / FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES / NO DAMN ESCAPE / FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES. Along with The Hives, I haven't heard energy and talent like this in a while. I totally recommend this single to everyone. I believe this is Icky from Sty zine's label. (RE)

Rocknroll Blitzkrieg, PO Box 11906, Berkeley, CA 94712

The Hidden Chord - Eight Blue Eyes, CD A middle-of-the-road rock band from Minneapolis, with elements of punk and garage. The songs aren't bad; they just don't really grab you. The production is good, though. Guitars have a warm, overdriven sound like they should, and drums sound like fat and full. (BJM)

The Blood of the Young, PO Box 14411, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Hissyfits – Letters from Frank, CD Total girly-rock in the best way. They have been all over the place lately and this release shows why. (EA) <a href="https://www.topqualityrockandroll.com">www.topqualityrockandroll.com</a>

The Hives – Hate To Say I Told You So, CDEP Domestic release of a great single by one of my favorite current bands. The Hives don't fool around and this three song blast should already live in you 45 bin, if not two of the songs are off their "Veni Vidi Vicious" record. If not pick up this digital version. (EA)

Gearhead PO Box 421219 San Francisco, CA 94142

The Hollywoods - Hollywood Delinquents, 7" A Swedish instrumental surf band that follows the straight surf formula. Sometimes it uses too many of your standard surf clichés. Perhaps its part of a joke I'm not getting. You can actually dance to this, though, which is a good thing. I wonder how the surfing is in Sweden this time of year... (BJM) Subway Star, c/o Jansson, Vargsparet 14, 610 55 Stigtomta, Sweden

I Hate Myself - S/T, CD These songs mostly mix two parts: first, the soft, clean tone, single-note guitar lines and melodic vocals part; second, the really loud, distorted guitar parts where the vocalist screams. Some of the loud screamy parts would remind me of early-90s alternative if it the vocalist sang instead of screamed. Call it alterna-screamo. (BJM) No Idea, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

**9** I'm Being Good - Sub Plot, CD Fans of bands like Radiohead, Pavement, and Weezer will really love this. Their sound is very melodic and thought provoking. The band uses a lot of irregular timings and unusual tunings in their songs. You cant help but wonder how on earth they put these songs together, and what they will produce in the future. (AA)

Infinite Chug, 14 Worcester Close, Langdon Hills, Essex, SS16 6TW UK

The Incredible Moses Leroy - Electric Pocket Radio, CD This is my new favorite album!! Wow! The music was absolutely amazing. Moses Leroy's music combines artsy complex melodies, very sweet emotional lyrics, and a pop beat; yet this album still maintains punk rock sensibilities. It's defiantly feel good music. I promise you if you sit down and listen to this record you'll be taken to a whole other place. If you don't buy another record this year, go out and get this one, I promise you won't regret it! (AA)

Ultimatum Music 8723 W. Washington blvd., Culver City, Ca 90232

Idaho/Cobolt, split 7" Slow, moody, and downer music with an indie rock flair. One song from each band. Don't know if either is unreleased, but this is supposedly limited to 200 copies. (AS) SNC, PO Box 1112, 39001 Magdeburg, Germany

9 The (International) Noise Conspiracy - A New Morning Changing, CD Revolution never sounded so fucking sexy! I'll admit I don't have the first Conspiracy record, but you don't need a background on these cats to dig their music. Exploding with "A Northwest Passage" and flowing smoothly into "Up For Sale" The (International) Noise Conspiracy are the spirit of activism come to life. Attacking the capitalist system, the commodification of life and globalism, with a driving dance beat built out of an affinity for sixties soul and garage punk, A New Morning, Changing Weather is one of the most vibrant, explosive and meaningful records to hit the shelves in a long time. This record oozes with sexual franticness, an impending sense of decadence, raw honesty, fear, and anger that is seldom found in any genre. This band is up with the political ranks of Public Enemy and Fela Kuti. I dare you to listen to "Capitalism Stole My Virginity" and not move. There is no reason why everyone should not own this record. My god, imagine if everyone did own this record... (GS)

A New Morning, Changing Weather Epitaph/Burning Heart Records 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026

§ Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros - Global A Go Go, CD Listening to Mr. Strummer and the Mescaleros, one gets the feeling Global A Go-Go is the record he wanted to make for a long, long time. Finely layered, a variety of sonic textures and a continuation of his experimentation with global rhythms that began with the Clash's Sandinista, Global a



#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Manning (BJM)

THE ROLLING STONES were a great band. They should have broken up a long time ago, because they were a great band. I was torn between two records to review here; I didn't know whether to do Exile on Main Street, which is arguably their best album, or Get Your Ya-Ya's Out, which is a collection of live tracks circa 1969. I went with the live album, because I don't have the energy to deal with the complexities of Exile right now. I will assert, though, that Exile is the best Rolling Stones album. Anyway, on Get Your Ya-Ya's Out, the Stones show why they were a great band, for all you non-believers. There are 10 tracks here, all recorded live at Madison Square Garden in New York City, and they are all heavy on the blues influence that you see in the Stones beginning in the late 60s. Among the numbers here are a traditional blues song titled "Love in Vain," two Chuck Berry songs, and Stones originals such as "Stray Cat Blues" and "Midnight Rambler." If you have seen the documentary titled Gimmie Shelter, you should know the awe that the Stones' live show of the late 60s could inspire. (You should also know the problems that could go with it—do yourself a favor and rent the video.) The best part of this recording is that is so unretouched. You can hear both guitars clearly, as well as the vocals and bass and drums, and every little mistake that the band made. But the guitars are the thing. The distinctive tone; that clean, overdriven sound is what makes this record great. And you can hear each one so clearly. I'm hard-pressed to find a band playing today that has the kind of groove the Stones once had, or the sound that they once had. Love it or hate it, you can beat it.

Stuff to which I have been listening lately includes Billie Holliday, the first Hellacopters record, Franks Wild Years by Tom Waits, and the World/Inferno Friendship Society.

Go-Go is a far cry from three chords and distortion, but doesn't stray from the simplicity of his yesteryears. If you're still hanging on for material like "Straight to Hell," "Complete Control," or even "White Riot," give it up. Besides, at this point it's been made clear that Strummer isn't interested in recreating the Clash. More in line with his work with the Pogues, musical composition for Alex Cox, and Clash tracks like "Street Parade," Strummer and Co.'s latest release has a tendency to get long winded but overall it's a good record. The fantastic folk hymn "Johnny Appleseed" opens up the record, pushing Strummer's folk tendencies past simple busking chords with a certain reverence for bluegrass. "Global A Go-Go" and "Bhindi Bhagee" are great ragas, while "Gamma Ray" and "Mondo Bongo" (what the fuck does that mean anyway!) create a dark mood and atmosphere showcasing Strummer's strong narrative songwriting that has seemed to dodge his career in light of Mick Jones' abilities. Lyrically, Strummer is all over the place. The honesty and humility in songs such as "Bummed Out City," and the Woody Guthrie inspired-dusty road politics of "Johnny Appleseed" and "Shaktar Donesk," are what we expect from Strummer. However, his sheer fascination with modern technology and global culture as seen in "Bhindi Bhagee" and then the stranger than science fiction of "Mega Bottle Ride" is proof that Joe still has a few cards up his sleeve. At the end of the day, Global a Go-Go isn't ground breaking. But who said its supposed to be. This record may be a starting point for a lot of people to listen outside their box of comfort, it maybe be a good record to chill out to or it may be perfect for the jaded listener dissatisfied with the continuing conformity of punk's voice. Regardless, Global a Go-Go is a record that deserves an honest and open listen, calls for the recognition of Strummer and the Mescaleros ability to musically stretch themselves and Strummer's ability to prove that there is life after the Clash. (GS)

Global a Go-Go Hellcat Records 2798 Sunset blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026

John Vanderslice/Sunset Valley - Split, 7" Very soft, artsy and melodic. (AA) Sea Level Records, PO Box 291775, Los Angeles, CA 90029

Judah Johnson - ST, CD What if they reconstructed the World Trade Center similar to the rebuilt Death Star from Star Wars? The U.S. would be like, "Yeah, it looks like an unfinished building with the top exposed, but inside we're hatching a plan to crush our enemies!" Wouldn't that be cool? Cooler than this mellow indie rock. Oh, not that we're the Dark Side of the Force. (NS)

Flame Shovel Records, www.flameshovel.com

Kid Gorgeous—Friday Night Knife Fight, CD Metal-prone hard core with growly screamed vocals like all those bands on the radio these days. Musically it's better than those bands, but the vocals get really boring. (KR)

Uprising Records, PO Box 1096, New York, NY 10003

King Brothers – S/T, CD Blazin, probably the best live band on earth right now. All the songs are in Japanese and will fit right along any Estrus fans record collection. This is a must have. I still stare at the cover and swear that they share a member with the Registrators, though I can't confirm this. (EA)

In the Red Records 118 W. Magnolia Blvd. PO Box 208 Burbank, CA 91506

Klopecks - Selbina, MO, CD Upbeat fast paced pop punk. I wish I could say more, but that's not really my thing. (AA)

Crack Records, PO Box 29048 Eaton Place, Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada R3C 4L1

The Ladderback—Introductions to Departure, CD Noisy, frantically paced, guitar-heavy hardcore that has its indie-rockish moments. The screamed vocals are buried in the mix, and from what I can tell, that's probably a good thing. Similar to Planes Mistaken for Stars. (KR) Bifocal Media, PO Box 50106, Raleigh, NC 27650

P Last Days of April-Angel Youth, CD You bereaved fans of the deceased Sunny Day Real Estate, fear not: For thousands upon thousands of their disciples are forming bands as I type this, all emulating the "emo" sound SDRE "pioneered." In fact, they've been forming for years now. Some of them pull it off. Some of them, um, don't. I humbly suggest Last Days of April fall in the former. They're at least very ambitious. The liner notes show six members, not including the string section. Yikes. Although the subdued pacing of first song ("From Here to Anywhere") made it a victim of the "seek" button on my computer, the rest of the songs gave pause to my growing skepticism. Layers of complementary sounds (guitars, strings, even an accordion) provide a nice foundation that the vocals slip into seamlessly. The danger here is selfindulgence, which leads to songs that do not rock at all, which leads to boredom for me. For the most part, Last Days of April keeps that to a minimum. Track two, "Aspirins and Alcohol" (sensitive-boy lyrics: "Will aspirins and alcohol some way decrease the ache / from knowing that you do to him the same you did to me?"), provides the kick that "From Here to Anywhere" lacked. "Will the Violins Be Playing?" does the same—they're poppy, but they exude an energy that makes them so much catchier. "Make Friends With Time," track six, is a harpsichord

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: (Mr) Dana Morse (DM)

Once upon a time there in the eighties there were skate boarders who not only tried to be different by skating but also had to back it up haircuts, clothes and music. Punk rock was the ideal soundtrack for the skateboard. Hell, skaters were so involved they even started the punk sub genre of skate rock. Bands like the Slammin' Watusis, Odd Numbers or Smokin' Injuns showed up on skate comps every where. But one of the bands that stuck out the amongst their peers was MCRAD. Featuring skaters and guitarist and vocalist Chuck Treece (Underdog, Farside, The Roots), they rocked out tunes about skating, personal feelings on life and the Evil Dead movies. This is what helped make skating fun for me. Aggro guitars, slick licks, driving drums, angry and smooth vocals from different members of the band, just great fucking music. These guys helped the genre along whether you know it or not (probably more of the later). I you can find their one album, "Absence of Reality", check it out. I you know Chuck, ask him when the discography comes out and where is my T-shirt he said he'd mail me.

On the turntable: New Tarentel, Anticon Giga Single, new Grade (it's all right), Teddy Duchamp's Army

affair that I think rips off part of "Baker Baker" by Tori Amos. Beware. With only a couple of exceptions, this is a great record. Fans of Elliott, Sunny Day Real Estate (the vocals are really similar) and others will probably really like this. And they have reason to. (KR)

The Lawrence Arms - Shady View Terrace, CD First off, spoofing a great movie's well thought out title sequence (in this case Pi), and doing it well is one thing. But doing it poorly (as in this case) is a horrible, horrible sin that is unforgivable unless the music is interesting enough for me to get past the cover. Unfortunately it isn't. The Lawrence Arms are playing in the style of progressive pop-punk (meaning: they've picked up on the emo-hardcore cross-over) - lots of well-placed screaming and poor singing plus hardcore tendencies mixed in with the fast poppunk stuff that they are obviously more comfortable with. Combined with poor lyrics (mostly about girls that broke their hearts) makes for pretty standard stuff. Ugh. (RE)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

The Lewd - Roughhouse, 7" After a few decades of bands copying your style it is hard to listen to this and not think, old sound, been done a hundred times. I love the Lewd's original material and this just doesn't measure up. (EA)

702 Records

Liar - Liar's Hell, CD I love a metal band who knows how to intro a song. It really bothers me when I pop in a CD and sit down to listen, then the beginning of the first song scares the crap out of me. I have to applaud these guys for understanding musical foreplay. (AA) Alveran Records c/o Sascha Franzen P.O Box 10 01 52, D-44701 Bochum, Germany In the U.S. Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 8692, Coral Springs, FL 33075

Living Under Lies, 7" Unintelligible dual vocals punctuate this five song hardcore platter. Lyrically more thought out than most other bands of this fractured sound. (AS)

Discontent Records, PO Box 4995, Portland, OR 97208-4995

Load - Feel the Power, CD Punk rock, most of which leans toward a redneck, roadhouse-style. They could use a little more roll to go with that rock, though. You get the sense that this is one of those bands who are better live than on their record. The production could be better: the guitars are overly distorted for the music. (BJM) 702 Records, PO Box 203, Reno, NV 89504

9 Lo-Fi Chorus, CD With all the crap that we get to review for this mag, this was a real shot of fresh air. This is a bunch of really great songs that are all sparsely recorded and follow time tested formulas musically. But they're really good songs. It feels like you are listening to a long lost Elvis Costello or Joe Jackson (who the vocalist sounds very similar to) demo tape. These guys drift easily from a haunting tormented tune, "Gallows", to happy bouncing, "Moonshine & Rivers" without losing any emotional intensity. I have trouble deciding if the unfleshed out quality of these songs needs to be fucked with and hoping that they sign with a big label, get an intelligent producer and engineer, and take over the world. Right now I'll live with them staying in the "my little secret" category. Warning: it's not punk rock, but definitely has the feel of it. (AS)

630 Acme St., Denton, TX 76205

Lumen - The Man Felt An Iron Hand ..., CD ... grab him by the hair, at the nape. Not one hand, a hundred hands seized him, each by the hair, and tore him head to foot, the way you tear up a sheet of paper, into hundreds of little pieces is the full name of this record. Almost beats the Cap'n Jazz album title. Instrumental, progressive moody music made by members of A Minor Forest and Tarentel. (RE) Temporary Residence Ltd., PO Box 22910 Baltimore, MD 21203-4910

Malade De Souci - Novmbr Aign, CD Twenty-nine tracks on this record. The shortest being five seconds, the longest being one minute, one second. Most fall to the 20-30 second range. Pretty much the same thing over and over again; atonal noise/music played spastic and weird instrumental with occasional incoherent screaming. When done well this is amazing (Lightning Bolt is one example of this) - in this case, it needs some work. If improved upon, this may go over well with fans of Arab on Radar, Cromtech, and the aforementioned L.B. (RE) CB Intl., Cp d.t. 407 Paris, France 60662

9 Man or Astro-Man?, Beyond the Black Hole, CD Instrumental/surf music is not must punk rockers favorite style of music, but somehow MOAM changed a lot of that. For heaven's sakes the band now sports an ex-member of the Quadrajets. This sci-fi/surf band has been around since the early 90's and have changed sounds form time to time. This release is a re-release of sorts. It is a re-mastered version of the out of print "What Remains Inside A Black Hole" and some singles and compilation cuts. Though most of this has entered my ears many of times I do really like these re-mastered versions of MOAM. If you are not initiated in their sound this would be a great disc to pick up with their newer "A Spectrum of Infinite Scale." (EA) Estrus Records

Matt Schickele - Cities Filled With Lights, CD Is open mic night not painful enough for you? Well, this is the combined effort of about 8 musicians, creating the kind of suck that one guy and a guitar can mostly make on his own. So I guess they can take in 25 cents a piece and a free mocha on a good night down at the old Java Hut. (NS) Feldspar, P.O. Box 1698, New York, NY 10013

Mazinga/Sex Sex Sex - split 7" Mazinga, from Michigan, play punk rock and roll. Simple, straight ahead, and rocking. I bet they're a lot of fun live. Sex Sex, from Sweden, are a little slower and a little more snotty and Oi! sounding, with a Misfits-style death-and-zombie thing

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Eric Action (EA)

After reading the novel High Fidelity and re-reading Stranded I have been thinking more about my TOP FIVE SONGS OF ALL TIME. Now this is an impossible task, I am now sure of it. The process has lead me to one list, one in that a song has to have multiple versions to be a truly great song. If more than two bands can make a great version of a song, then it is probably a song to remember. As of today here it is, though it has changed by the time you read this. In reverse order, like any good list: 5) Teenage Kicks, originally done by the Undertones and covered by a million bands including the Problematics. Seeing Teengenerate and the New Bomb Turks do this song together on stage was worth two days of blown out ears. I once made my wife listen to the song on a car ride over 20 times in a row until she would sing with me. 4) Roadrunner, originally done by the Modern Lovers and probably better known for the Sex Pistols cover. Jonathon Richman wrote this classic as a mere teenager, "roadrunner, roadrunner, going a thousand miles per hour." The best car song of all times that few have heard. 3) Surrender, originally done by Cheap Trick and covered by another million bands including everything from the great Vikings to the pop-punk Big Drill Car. My ex-band the Chinese Millionaires ripped off the end in one of our songs and That 70's Show has Cheap Trick ripping off their own song while covering Big Star (got that?) in the shows theme song. The best anthem of teenage life, without a doubt. 2) Who Do You Love?, a Bo Diddley original done by every garage band, included my home city of Lansing's Woolies on the 60's Nuggets compilations. Thee Headcoats also hacked this one up, but with lines like, "I walk forty-seven miles of barbwire, I use a cobra snake for a neck tie..." every version of this song I hear is always worth a listen. 1) Slow Down, originally done by Larry Williams and made famous to the punkers through The Jam's debut LP. It is probably my favorite song of any list, and on any given night in this country a punk band, a Beatles cover band, and some Rhythm and Blues band is playing this song. Even though only one original punk song was here, along with some covers, I do urge all of you to track down early rock and roll. There is a reason that the Jam covered so many cool rock and roll / R and B songs. Open your mind a little.

Currently I zipped through both Banned in Dc and Our Band Could Be Your Life – Both essential books in my opinion. The turntable has had a healthy diet of the bands in the second book listed: Minutemen, Black Flag, Minor Threat, Dinosaur Jr. Mission of Burma and more. Also Elvis Costello, Clash, Damned, Big Boys, Dead Boys, Modern Lovers, and Cheap Trick. It was a nice month or so down memory lane, now I gotta listen to something new.

happening. But they're no Misfits. (BJM)
Spasthmatic Records, PO Box 20913, Mesa AZ 85277

Media Whores - 1984, 7" Part of the two single blast (see next review) from the Media Whores. Pat Dull and the folks at Break-Up! Give an A-side blaster, an ode to 1984 complete with pick-slides. While the B-side is a cover of the Cult of the Psychic Fetus an Ohio both-a-billy song. (EA)

Break-Up! Records PO Box 15372 Columbus, OH 43215

Media Whores – Feel It!, 7" Great power-pop nugget – the A-side "Feel It!" will get you to sing along. The Cheap Trick and Figgs comparisons may be getting old, but I love all these bands. The B-side an acoustic number that is typical throw away B-side, but that is the beauty of this band. They understand what a single was, and should be. Viva Break-Up! Records and the Media Whores. (EA)

Break-Up! Records PO Box 15372 Columbus, OH 43215

Melchoir, Dan, Firecracker, 7" Great 1920/30's style southern acoustic songs. Best known for his work with Holly Golightly and Billy Childish this solo single shines bright. What a wonderful disc to spin again and again. (EA)

Smartguy Records 3288 21st Street, PMB #32 San Francisco, CA 94110

§ The Melvins – Colossus of Destiny, CD I haven't followed the Melvins for a bit but I do know that Buzzo has been hanging with Mike Patton and doing that whole experimental music thing. This is cool, but to have 55 minutes of controlled noise and samples to lead into a 4 minute song seems a bit much. This is a live thing (poor bastards at that show) and the only track with music (Track 2 plays for 4 seconds with no music.). This is strictly for the die-hard and noise kids but some may consider it to be art. I don't know about that, but it does qualify as interesting... (DM)

Ipecac Records, PO Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501

Mensen – Delusions of Grandeur, CD From the opening I:02 blast of punk rockin' Norway's Mensen consisting of three girls and one guy are ready to R-O-C-K your world. They do a good job of it. This full

length has both a Dead Moon and Rolling Stones cover. (EA) Gearhead PO Box 421219 San Francisco, CA 94142

MHz - Action Figure, 7" Three songs penned from Andy Clayton who was, in a past life, a member of the Monarchs of garage fame. This band is more straight up punk-rock. Any of these songs could fit on an early SST release. Well done knob twisting from the Ghetto Recorders ala Jim Diamond. (EA)

Flying Bomb Records PO Box 971038 Ypsilanti, MI 48197

The Minus Tide – The Rock Autopsy has Begun, CDEP Very clean, intense melodic hardcore-metal. These guys remind me a little of Early Grace but not nearly as inventive or good. Man, that Early Grace record is rad. (RE)

Factory R, 39 Meadow Lane, Wheeling, WV 26003

Monkey Buzzness/Primate 5 – Split 7" 2 bands with monkey related names playing lo fi garage rock. Monkey Buzzness from Italy are a little better, sounding a little more spacey and interesting. But kudos to Seattle's Primate 5 for their song topic. Competent rock and roll, just not my thang. (NS)

Rockin Bones, Pagani Gualtiero Piazzale Della Machina.3 43100 Parma Italy

The Mud City Manglers - Tired of Losing, 7" This band has a very classic sound. It's reminiscent of the Sex Pistols and the Ramones. (AA) 007 Records International / Subarton, 534 East 14th street #15 NY, NY 10009

Muff Potter - bordsteinkantengeschichten, CD Self proclaimed supporters of the angry pop music movement worldwide. I call them the German language Jawbreaker. Good stuff. Just wished I retained more from those second language classes. (AS)

Huck's Plattenkiste, Nagel, Tiefe Strasse 2., 48431 Rheine, Germany

Mustang, 7" Nothing new here. Just three songs of competently executed "Supershitty" era Hellacopters, Scando punk rock and roll. (AS) 007 Records/Subarton, 534 East 14th Street, New York, NY 10009

Mutiny - S/T, 7" Excellent fast hardcore debut from a band that's sure to be around for a while. Sounds a lot like early DC hardcore, with brief

#### WUSIC

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: (Kyle Ryan (KR)

BAD BRAINS, ROCK FOR LIGHT. Among my friends who were lucky enough to see Bad Brains in their prime, a pensive, almost reverent look comes across their faces when they speak of the band. It's a common feeling—just read Mark Andersen's incredible book, Dance of Days, which does a great job conveying the band's importance. The legacy they left behind is a turbulent and at times infuriating one, but Rock for Light (produced by Ric Ocasek of the Cars) helps justify the band's place in the pantheon of punk's greatest—as much as you can do that without actually seeing them play. These guys supposedly made At the Drive-In look like a bunch of geezers on Quaaludes. Listening to the record, you get a sense of what it must have looked like; the album practically explodes through your speakers with its frenetic energy, an energy that doesn't come at the expense of quality songwriting. I don't think Dr. Know's intense, complicated guitar work has ever been replicated in punk rock, period. He goes from intricate solos into rapid-fire muting in the space of a couple of measures (see "Sailin' On"). It's matched by an equally aggressive rhythm section with Earl's drums and Darryl's bass. On top of all of this, you have H.R.'s distinctive vocals. That's Bad Brains: distinctive. There's never any confusion about who you're hearing. In short, this is an exhausting record. There are too many good songs to note, though personally I'm not into the handful of reggae tracks. Regardless, Rock for Light is timeless. Put it up against any other record before or since, and it will hold its own. Few albums have that kind of staying power, and if you don't have it, for the love of God, go get it RIGHT NOW.

These Records are Good, Too: Spider Virus, Radio Invaders; Juno, A Future Lived in Past Tense; Ted Leo/Pharmacists, The Tyranny of Distance; J Church, One Mississippi; Cursive, Burst and Bloom

slower moments of new school mixed in. (AE) Seven Lucky, PO Box 9546, Denver, CO 80209

Naked Raygun – Free Shit, CD Recorded live in Chicago on their two final shows in 1997. There are so many better places to start with this band, though this is a good live recording. (EA)
Haunted Town Records 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave. #169 Chicago, IL 60647

The Nerds - ...Just Because She Didn't Want To Fuck, CD The Positive: This is some good sounding punk rock n' roll. The Negative: I DON'T GIVE A SHIT IF IT SOUNDS GOOD, YOU DEPICT RAPE ON YOUR COVER, YOU RECREATE RAPE FOR AN INTRO, AND YOU SING ABOUT RAPE. FUCK YOU AND YOUR MISOGYNISTIC BULLSHIT! It may have worked for GG Allen, but in this day in age it doesn't fly with me. Someone at Hitlist will probably dig this. (DM) Stardumb Records, PO Box 21145 3001 ac Rotterdam, The Netherlands

9 New Idea Society - S/T, CD New Idea Society is an awesome name for this band. Listening to their music it's obvious that they have a different perspective on things. The music was fresh and melodic, with steady pounding beats. It had an experimental artsy pop sound, yet still it maintained very dark undertones. My only regret was that there were just four songs on this record. (AA) Undecided Records, 10695 Lake Oak Way, Boca Raton Florida 33498

Noisegate - As We Were Walking, CD Idiotic new age art CD made up of various sounds and noises. Listening to farts is more amusing. Fuck these guys and their self-named 'sound art.' (AE)

Manufacture Recordings, 5410 Bergen-op-zoom, Nanaimo, BC V9T 2M2, CANADA

One Perfect Crime – Angst for the Memories, CD Four songs of mediocre sing-a-long punk rock. Obscure or not, it reminds me of the old Houston band The Latch Key Kids. (RE)
Poopskin Records, 220 Sechrist Flat Rd., Felton, PA 17322

\*\*P One Time Angels - Sound of A Restless City, CD Here's a CD I actually meant to check out before. I saw them live one time, but I'm convinced that the more effective earplugs are, the less you can enjoy a concert, especially if you're not familiar with the songs. The things I have to worry about in my old age. Which is fitting, because this CD is kind of pop punk for older people. That's not a dis. Hear me out! Their sound is definitely rooted (did I just say rooted?) in the East Bay, and members were part of some well-known bands from the area. But they've definitely moved on from VFW halls and basement shows and become good songwriters in the process. The lyrics are colorful and

heartfelt, and seem to celebrate the mood and feeling of their surroundings in the tradition of other classic Bay Area bands. Jesse Michaels (Op Ivy) even penned lyrics on a couple songs. I hear some similarities to later Jawbreaker, but also to the mid era Replacements, after they learned to play their instruments and write actual songs. To call this pop punk earlier was probably incorrect. But if you've grown up on Lookout bands and the like, this band is probably the next natural progression. In other words, good stuff! (NS) Adeline Records, 5337 College Ave. #318, Oakland, CA 94618

Oversized – HappyInbetweenOrSad, CD Pretty slick Weezeresque pop punk with keyboards from this Belgian band. They have that great production which most European punk bands seem to have. Oversized is definitely catchy, but disposable in that pop sort of way. I could understand a lot of people liking this though. (NS)

Funtime Records, J. Quenten, Vlasselaer 13, 3221 Nieuwrode, Belgium (www.funtimerecords.com)

Pintsize - Collapse in Style, CD Sniffle-core produced by Don Fury, with nearly on-key vocals that work better in the parts of the songs where the vocals are low in the mix. (AE)

Building Records, 18 Spring St., New York, NY 10012

Planesmistakenforstars - Fuck With Fire, CD Energetic, crazed emocore. Screamed, shouted, vocals. All in all, if played loud enough, proved to be quite cathartic. (AS)

No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

\*Pseudo Heroes – Betraying Angry Thoughts, CD The return of punk that touches upon smooth, melodic and pop while not concentrating on any one aspect and truly rocking out has come home again. This is very reminiscent of bands like later Husker Du, early Down By Law or Chemical People recreating a style and not just sounding like any of the other bands. Slightly raspy smoothed out vocals only compliment this catchy charging rock trio. This may also fall into that sk8 music genre as well, but regardless of that this is fun and perfect for skating, driving or dancing to at the shows. The PH are also down with Motorhead and the "Iron Fist". Worth a look see. (DM)

Theologian Records, PO Box 1070 Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Quasi—The Sword of God, CD This features Sam Coomes, who plays bass on tours with Elliott Smith, and Janet Weiss of Sleater–Kinney. Synth-heavy pop that would segue well Elliott Smith, Apples in Stereo, etc. (KR) Touch and Go, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625



#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: (Neal Shah (NS)

Alright, instead of a classic album, I'm going to review a classic movie. Anyways, HOT DOG: THE MOVIE is one of the best comedies of all time. Why was it so great you ask? Well let's break it apart. First of all, sport themed movies are always good, in this case skiing. They show cool stunts, assemble wacky protagonists and involve enemies, which I'll get to next. The foreign antagonist; a classic staple of the 80's. Someone to root against and mock, as demonstrated in David McNaughton's famous line, "Well, Rudy, you can kiss my ass. Not on zis side, not on zat side, but right in ze middle." The next important inclusion to a great comedy is simply, boobs. Whether they are used in a comic sense, ala popping out, followed by the sound "boyoyoing," or if they are simply used in a sex scene, they are necessary for the flow of the movie. American Pie and Road Trip both brought back this tradition. Hot Dog has about 4 boob scenes to contend with though. Another essential part of a good comedy is classic lines or phrases in the dialogue. This is probably the hardest part of the movie process. You can't predict which lines will go on to be recited by people in chat rooms 30 years later, but you can create kind of characters to say them. "Dudes," more foreign people, dumb people and so on. That's where you'll get your "Shibby," "This is a fuck" and "Fagabeefe?" from. The pursuit of getting laid is always good, and although it's even the topic of dramas, the way in which it's handled is the key. Like Squirrel getting a blowjob on the ski lift. Do yourself a favor and rent Hot Dog tonight.

Other movies I watch too much: They Call Me Bruce, Midnight Madness, Super Fuzz, Back To School; Music: Jealous Sound, new Jimmy Eat World, Justice League, Excel, Accused; Books: Yeah right!!!

The Ramainz – Live in NYC, CD There aren't many of things sadder than an old man re-hashing the music that made him famous, but under a different name. The Ramainz are Dee-Dee Ramone, Marky Ramone plus a non-Ramone playing a bunch of the Ramones songs at a fraction of the intensity that they were originally played. Hearing these songs played like this makes me nauseous. The computer-generated artwork that accompanies this record makes me even more nauseous. The count-off (1,2,3,4!) for each song is delivered by Marky like he is playing from his deathbed, and the songs sound weak and uninspired. All the hits are here, twenty-one tracks in all, but the spirit is gone. The best example of this is, "Warthog" which was always the fastest and least-pop song the Ramones ever penned, and one of my favorites — but Dee Dee's tone-deaf singing drills it right into the ground. In my opinion, this record should never have been allowed to be released. (RE)

Pinhead Records, Casilla de Correo 1297, CP 1000, Buenos Aires, Argentina, South America

Raw Knowledge—Nemesis to Silence, CD A spoken-word record of sorts, this CD has 23 tracks taken from all sorts of sources: speeches by Malcolm X, Richard Pryor, Gil Scott and Bob Ostertag to name a few. It's an interesting and surreal amalgam of activist culture that unfortunately gets caught up in histrionics. Music takes a back seat to what's being said here; the tracks, if they have any music at all, keep it in the background to a voiceover. Gender politics tend to dominate, though racism follows closely behind. A lot of it is truly awful, the kind of stuff you'd find in a high-school sophomore's journal. The points are noble ones, and worth fighting for, but I have to say the execution is really pedestrian and cheesy. I'm not sure what this CD intends to do, but by the end of it, I didn't care. I just wanted it to stop—not because what it was saying was hard to hear but because it lacked anything that would make me want to keep listening. Surely there has to be a better way to get the word out. (KR)

Retarded—S/T, CD "We always loved to play easy, fast and loud music together," say the liner notes. Mission accomplished. Your typical Screeching Weasel disciples (the vocals are dead ringers for Ben Weasel's) playing bland pop punk. (KR)

Stardumb Records PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands

9 Rise Against - The Unraveling, CD Another band that I wanted to check out. When 88 Fingers Louie reformed and put out their last album, I couldn't really get into it. I thought that maybe their new, more hardcore direction didn't sound quite right for some reason.

But with this new group, it's obvious that the former bassist and guitarist from 88 Fingers know what they're doing. With a new drummer and singer, they've created something tight enough for Fat, but more hardcore sounding than anything I've heard on the label yet. They mix that fast pop punk sound with melodic hardcore, with similarities to Kid Dynamite, Gorilla Biscuits or Satanic Surfers. The singer has a great voice that alternates effortlessly between yelling and singing. The drumming is powerful without being stuck on fast autopilot. And the rhythm section is great too. I could see the bassist whipping out a bass solo ala Joey DeMaio. Speaking of Manowar, the title track to this album is pretty fucking triumphant! I wouldn't mind if the guitarist threw in some short solos. I know he can do it. He has long hair for gosh sakes! Besides the last Propagandhi, I think this is the best thing Fat has put out in a while. (NS)

Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

S.Process – More Me, CD So this guy I know, let's call him S. Process, he grew up in England during the early 80's. In the late 80's he moved to DC to go to college. He majored in art, but then dropped out to go to technical college and study electronics. Now he has a high paying job and the respect of his family and co-workers. Way to go! (NS) Trackstar Records, www.trackstarrecords.com

Saint Sophia - The Deepsweet Nothings Network, CD Soft melodic music. I will not say rock, despite the use of guitar/bass/drums, because this doesn't rock. It's more like music to sleep by. (BJM)
Little Girl Empire, no address given

Saves the Day - Stay What You Are, CD Popular band that tours a lot. Hell, I've even seen them. I must say that I like this CD more than I liked their live set. A lot of different sounds are being dubbed "emo" these days, but Saves the Day are really just a pop band with a punk drummer. Irregardless of how you want to categorize 'em, this is cheesy fun for the weeper in all of us. Damn—I'm actually getting really into this album. (AE)

Vagrant Records, 2118 Wilshire Blvd. #361, Santa Monica, CA 90404

Season To Risk – The Shattering, CD I think I have a 7" by this band that some serial killer drew the cover for. Bodacious! Mix grunge, punk, Jesus Lizard, thick bass, early 90's alternative, Helmet, Dinosaur Jr., let some of the ALL guys produce and release it and I guess this is what you get. I'd rather make a strawberry smoothie. (NS)

Owned & Operated Records, P.O. Box 36, Fort Collins, CO 80522

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: (Russell Etchen (RE)

ANTIOCH ARROW — GEMS OF MASOCHISM, LP. Remember now, way back when, all the way back to the bleak, early days of the 90s. Okay? There were a handful of bands coming out of California that were playing a new style of hardcore that combined the intensity of hardcore with the drama and style of emo and the spastic energy of a small hyperactive child. Bands like Mohinder, Swing Kids, Spanakorzo, and Second Story Window were all playing out and then self-destructing in a matter of months, or a year — most not even lasting much more. Antioch managed to last a little longer(I think) — putting out two LPs, a few singles, and then this record — which took the hardcore out of the mix, and added in a lot of drama. Released on the now defunct label, Amalgamated, Gems of Masochism is moody, and overly dramatic in all the best ways. Flashy and dark with lyrics like LETS FLIRT WITH THE NIGHT / BECAUSE THE MOON IS FULL / AND I AM WITH RED PAINT / HOW YOU LOOK WITH MASCARA ON / HOW YOU LOOK WITH HIGH HEELS ON. The lyrics aren't that far off from what they were singing about before — but now the music fits much better. This band evolved into an even artier form when they turned into Get Hustle, who are much weirder and take much more patience to enjoy. On an even weirder tangent, the drummer, Ron Anarchy, of Antioch and Get Hustle has been playing drums in the old hardcore band Final Conflict for a while as well. (RE)

TOP TEN LIST: Arab on Radar – Yahweh or the Highway and live, Tear it Up – everything, Converge – Jane Doe, Nirvana bootlegs, Olivia Tremor Control – Unrealized Film Script..., Fort Thunder (www.forthunder.org)...I never went, but sympathize greatly. Cave In by Brian Ralph (www.highwaterbooks.com) and King-Cat Comics by John Porcellino

Sham Science - Low Frequency High Frequency, CD A drum machine, a guitar and a high school understanding of nuclear physics. Does it get any better than that? Listen to MC Steven Hawking instead, boyee! (NS)

www.shamscience.com

9 The Sheila Divine—Where Have My Countrymen gone, CD Moody, graceful, and melodic agipop. I think they sound a bit like the Smiths, but my lady says their sound is more like the Cure or Dramarama. This records doesn't has the same edge as The New Parade and finds Aaron Perrino and new guitarist Colin Decker experimenting more with the texture of the melodies. Maybe it's cause they're not on Roadrunner records anymore, who knows? Either way, Aaron Perrino is one of the few people in these recorded times that can actually sing and the band is tight as hell. Songs like "Every year," "Walking Dead," "Ostrich" and the title track are well crafted agipop just this side of punk with a sonic fury and intelligence that is impressive. They got love for 80's pop, but punk has never shied from wearing its heart on its sleeve. Too bad they hardly ever come out to the west coast. (GS)

Co-Op Pop Records, 32 Oak Square Ave, Brighton, MA 02134

The Short Lived - Long Live The Short Lived, CD Street or dirt punk from Boston, MA with guy and girl vocals. I haven't figured it out yet but this is for the crusty kids. Snotty girl vocals and angry guy vocals over crunchy guitars and upbeat drums make this is a decent punk shindig of a time. If you dig the style this is may be something you will dig. (DM)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134

Skarhead - NY Thugcore The Hardcore Years 1994 - 2000, CD Skarhead is pretty hardcore. Their songs are fast with growled vocals; kind of an old school style with a little hip hop flava thrown in. I guess thugcore is a decent description of their style. They seem very proud of their connections with drugs, sex and violence. Some of it is actually extremely offensive. I'm not straight-edge or anything, in fact I consider myself extremely liberal, but they took it just a little too far. If you can get past this, their music is actually pretty good, especially their later stuff. (AA)

Triple Crown Records 331 West 57th St. PMB 472 New York, NY 10019

9 Sommerset - Fast Cars, Slow Guitars, CD This band is from New Zealand, and they've been busten their asses over there for the past five years, putting out albums and touring. Now their goal is to break onto the North American scene. If you're a fan of Hot Water Music you'll fall in love with this. They've really got it together. (AA) Phyte, P.O. Box 90363 Washington, DC 20090

The Sound of Rails - Prelude of Hypnotics, CD Slow-moving music made by bass and drums, with one clean-tone guitar that plays mostly single-note parts over it. Occasional vocals, and off-beat rhythms here and there. (BJM)

3 Bay Hopper, PO Box 241709, Omaha, NE 68124

Subside – One Day Habit, CD Radio-friendly pop-punk played by four dudes with secret hopes that there will be lots of make-out sessions with random girls while on tour. Hot! (RE)

Super Speedway, 10 Almaden Blvd., Ste. 1460, San Jose, CA 95113

The Templars - Horns of Hattin, CD Well, I love this band but for some reason all I got in my box was the cover for this with no CD! I'm sure it's great, though. I'm gonna buy it and so should you. (AE) GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

Terminal Crash - S/T, 7" Hardcore with a splash of rockabilly and classic rock (AA)

Redsound Records www.redsoundrecords.com

The Third Eye Foundation - i poo poo on your juju, CD A remix, in the non traditional sense, album that would be fantastic background music for any upcoming art gallery shows. (AS)

Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Three Years Down - Sneakin' In/Live Wire, 7" This band is very rock and has been around for a while now. This is total ass shaker 80's rock played by guys into punk. (AE)

702 Records, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504

The Thumbs - Last Match, CD DC's The Thumbs rock and sound like a less-clean version of Face to Face with such a heavy use of backing vocals that it almost sounds like dual vocals throughout. Thumbs up. (AE)

Adeline Records, 5337 College Ave. #318, Oakland, CA 94618

Tom Lo Macchio / Rob & The Pinhole Stars – split, 7" Tom is all about the sad 80's style new wave song of beautifully arranged pianos and synthesizer in that OMD kind of way. Rob and Co kind of have this lounge thing going on with guy and girl vocals then it turns folk. Riiiiiight. (DM) Smith and Nephew Co., PO Box 1112, 39001 Magdeburg, Germany

Trailer Park Tornados - Heroes of the Hopeless, 7" Oh my, this is some lofi shit. Very scratchy, very snotty, punk. This sounds like shit, as in one-step-above-being-recorded-on-a-boombox shit. It's almost

#### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Scott Yahtzee (SY)

No matter how much I tried I could never stay on a skateboard long enough to do anything. The only time I spent in the air was when I jumped off my board so I wouldn't fall again. Fuckin' pathetic. Now in my late twenties all I have is a pair of skinned knees. My failure to skate almost makes me feel unworthy to claim how much I love the first Suicidal Tendencies album, but I do. I copied it off a friend when I was in middle school and it made me feel awesome. And after that album I discovered countless others records that affected me the same. No matter where I go in this world, I can meet a new friend and develop an instant bond with them as long as they grew up with Suicidal. Listening to the album these days still does as much for me lyrically and musically as it did when I was thirteen. I still feel alienated, I still feel like a wimpy dipshit, and my parents still try to figure out my life for me because I can't.

I have been listening to nothing but Thin Lizzy, Converge, and the new End It record. It is all about the loud guitars this month...

charming, in a way. (BJM)
Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reton VA 20195

True Feedback Story – ST, 7" Emo-y rock from this Florida band. There are 6 songs on this 7" and they're short, but sweet, like Billy Barty. Good cynical/notebook journal type lyrics. Imagine if Rites of Spring, Cap'n Jazz and Hot Water Music had an orgy. Think of all the schlongs! (NS)

P.O. Box 12773, Gainesville, FL 32604-2773

Turn Around Norman - S/T 7" First of all, it's annoying when bands don't put anything on the label of a record, leaving the listener in the dark. It this side A or side B? Do I play this at 33, 45, or 78 RPM? What am I supposed to do with a white label? That out of the way, I'll get to the music. Screamy post-hardcore with both male and female vocals. Lyrics/politics are anti-corporate/anarchist. Watch out, because I'm sure these kids are going to change the world with their rock and roll band. (BJM)

Waiting for Jaime Records, c/o Ryan Barker, PO Box 1085, Morgantown WV 26507

The Union - To Be Good At Something, CD A mix of mostly slow, melodic, acoustic-based songs. Clean production. Sounds like they would like to be on the radio, perhaps on the same station as Hootie and the Blowfish. Sample lyric: "I'd give anything and everything/To be good at something." (BJM)

Ghostmeat Records, 70 Forest Heights Dr., Athens, GA 30606

Union of the Dead - S/T, CD Pop-punk on the heavier end with Glen Danzig meets Hot Water Music vocals going on. Mediocre at best. (RE) Crash & Burn Recordings, (no address listed)

Vanilla Pod—Dead End Town, CDEP Three quick songs of the poppy, melodic punk variety. Group singalong choruses enhance the catchiness, but this would get really old after three songs. (KR)
Deck Cheese Records, 49 Muswell Hill, London, N10 3PN UK

Voice of a Generation-Police Story, 7" This is actually a really good Rancid clone. Their cover of the Real Kids "All Kindsa Girls" is a fun version and unexpected from a street punk band. (EA)
Burning Heart Records Von-Steuben-Str.17 48143 Munster Germany

The Workin' Stiffs – Dog Tired...and then some, CD I believe that this is a partial discography of this street-punk band. There's a listing of every show they played (interesting only to see who they played with) – and covers of GBH, Cockney Rejects, and Sham 69. (RE) TKO Records, 4104 24<sup>th</sup> ST. #103, San Francisco, CA 94114

9 Wow & flutter - better today then, CD This is about as unpunk as it gets. But then again isn't punk all about pissing people off? This is super mellow, and with the length of some of the songs, I have trouble remembering if they even had any singing on them. These guys give a few possible nods to the Velvet Underground and Galaxie 500, but it's

the pristine production that sucks you in for the long listen. These guys have some kinda stamina...one song busts the twenty minute mark. Set your dreams on autopilot cause wow & flutter are taking slackers on the long slow ride (not to be confused with Foghat). This was strangely beautiful and pleasing to my ears and somehow avoiding the real downer vibe. God damnit, I'm getting old. Where's that raging hatred. Too bad it's in some artsy packaging that will get lost in my CD collection. (AS)

Jealous Butcher Records, PO Box 14306, Portland, OR 97293-0306

? X - Aspirations, LP Essentail 1979 Australian punk LP that was recoded in five hours. This fits right in after the Sex Pistols and alongside Wire. This was re-released awhile back on Amphetamine Reptile, but only on CD. I don't really know the reason to pick up another copy of this on vinyl. For those who don't own an original or one of the many re-issues from 1989 or 1993 then pick this mother up. Could be one of the best 25 records of all time. You may soon forget about that other great band with the name X. Well, hopefully there is room for both in your life. Andy Slob wrote a great review on this about a year ago in these pages and I hope you all bought it then. They are expecting to tour as well, and they aren't re-forming 'cause they have been playing all these years at least sporadically. (EA)

Rocknroll blitzkrieg PO Box 11906 Berkeley, CA 94712

§ Your Halo is a Radar - S/T, 10" Great emo driven sound ported through the country of Sweden. I was amazed at how much this reminded me of the Heroin/Born Against/Nation of Ulysses days of said genre. Though not sounding like one band enough to pigeonhole their sound, this is not wimpy stuff. I could have copped out and have written a short review for this release, but I couldn't get myself to do it. The music is so powerful and well recoded that I wanted to listen to it over an over. Pretty big considering I just don't listen to this sort of music too often any more. I am sure I am out of the loop here and that you all know this band — but they are new to me and it is exciting. I would suggest hunting this down. (EA)

Sweden, <a href="https://www.insect.org">www.insect.org</a>

V/A - Broklyn (sic) Beats Series: Criterion, 7" Dumb technological crap, but at least it has cool anti-establishment anti-racist ramblings over some of the beats. (AE)

Crucial Systems, 440 Broadway #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211

V/A - Broklyn (sic) Beats Series: DJ J. Rupture, 7" This isn't Funk Planet, is it? Crap dancehall mix shit that will make you start screaming the Dead Milkmen's "You'll Dance to Anything" over the beats. (AE) Crucial Systems, 440 Broadway #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211

9 V/A - False Object Sensor, CD Vermiform (PP columnist Sam McPheeters' label) is already at its 50th release! I remember getting lost and missing Born Against's show in a barn outside of my home
1. \*\*The columnist of the columnist of the

town in high school and freaking out. That was almost a decade ago now that I missed that show, and over the course of eleven years Vermiform has put out a pile of unique and distinguished hardcore records. This comp's liner notes show how dedicated McPheeters is to putting out as many crazy bands as he can. There are some fun anecdotes in the notes, including a recollection of how pissed people got over the 1994 ad threatening to sue anyone who bootlegged Born Against and lots of info about the present whereabouts of some of the performers in the various oddball bands featured. Some of the more notable tracks here are the classic Heroin doing a cover of Battalion of Saints' "Second Coming," an unreleased song from Born Against's 1989 demo, and a neat remix of Skull Kontrol's "New Rock Critic." Not everyone will like all of the songs and there are some fairly selfindulgently arty numbers that will probably annoy a lot of folks, but this is still a must-have overall and an ideal way to celebrate this label's perseverance. (AE)

Vermiform, 112 Harvard Ave., PO Box 316, Claremont, CA 91711

V/A – Funtime Magazine Compilation 2001/01 CD Lots of very melodic yet very hard stuff. There was a really good variety. Some of the songs were kind of cute and squishy, but still god, while others will have your neighbors screaming bloody murder. I thought it balanced out well. Whenever I get a compilation that is all hard I feel so down after listening to it. This one has little pick me ups built right in. (AA)

Funtime Records/Magazine : J. Qinten, Dutselhoek 12, 3220 Holsbeek, Belgium

9 V/A - If I Had a Song: The Songs of Pete Seeger Vol. 2, CD Concluding more than an hour of American folk history with a quick ditty about honest elections, Pete Seeger's music and message is no less important now than when he rambled 'round with Woody Guthrie. At this moment is history, too many people have little to no idea who this banjo playing troubadour is, which is as just as much a shame as it the fact that too few people recognize the name Howard Zinn. From the talking blues to Cuban rhythms, children's songs to ballads, Seeger and his "Sing it Down" ministry cannot entirely be captured on record, but this as good a starting point as any. With modern folk icons such as Billy Bragg, Dar Williams, Joan Baez and Steve Earle (those are just the names everyone knows!) making appearances, this record is a testament, not just a tribute, to one of the most important activists in musical history. To quote Maple Syrup Time, " As in life or revolution/ rarely is there quick solution/Anything worthwhile takes a little time." Before you bump Anti-Flag as you sport black threads on your way to another ambiguous protest against globalism, educate yourself by picking up this collection. You want the roots of radicalism, then here it fucking is. (GS)

Appleseed Recordings PO Box 2593 West Chester, PA 19380 610-701-5755

V/A - Live at the Complex 3, CD Electronica comp. I should get a gold star just for listening to this one all the way through. (AE) Entartete Kunst, PO Box 411194, San Francisco, CA 94141

V/A - Many Miles Away, CD What is more pointless then a II track cover CD of Police songs. I guess it is in the eye of the beholder here. At least most versions were unique and not trying to sound like the original. College radio stations will love this crap, indie arty versions of bland songs. (EA)

Solarmanite Records 113 Pavonia Ave #421 Jersey City, NJ 07310

9 V/A-Plea for Peace, CD Now, how do you give a crappy review to a

benefit CD and not come across like a prick? This CD, and tour that followed it, provides assistance to the Kristin Brooks Hope Center, a youth-crisis hotline. Over the course of its 28 tracks, it reads like a who's-who of bands that are popular these days: Alkaline Trio, Hot Water Music, Atom & His Package, At the Drive-In, The Ataris, International Noise Conspiracy, etc. Some of it is unreleased stuff, but a lot of this is available on other records. Lowpoints: Alkaline Trio, AFI, Zero Zero, Shai Hulud, Bratmobile, Highpoints: Hot Water Music, ATDI, Grade, Ataris, International Noise Conspiracy, Selby Tigers, Strike Anywhere. Anyway, like most comps, it's hit or miss, though there are quite a few falling in the "miss" category. Still, this CD has plenty of redeeming moments, and you can't go wrong with doing a good deed. (KR)

V/A - Pushing Scandinavian Rock To The Main, Vol. 2, CD Radio only promo? Label sampler. Sixteen tracks of rockin punk with lots of soul and garage flavorings. I was pleasantly and shockingly surprised by the overall quality of this CD. (AS)

Bad Afro Records, Poste Restante, Frederiksberg Alle 6, DK -12820 Frederiksberg C. Denmark

V/A, Re Direction, CD Cheaply priced nineteen track sampler of the emo things out on Polyvinyl records. Some unreleased tracks from Ivory Coast, matt pond PA, Pele and AM/FM. (AS)

Polyvinyl Record Co, Post Box 1885, Danville, IL 61834-1885

9 V/A - Skins and Pinz Volume 2, CD GMM is one of my very favorite labels. There aren't all that many labels left that you can count on virtually 100% of the time, but GMM is one label that you can pretty much pick up any release and know you're in for first-class oi or streetpunk. This collection showcases not only the great bands on GMM like Anti Heroes (the rumors that they broke up better be false), Hudson Falcons, and Global Threat, but also other amazing bands like The Wretched Ones, The Forgotten, and Relix. With the deluge of these sorts of bands putting records out these days, this comp serves a great way to catch up on the last few years in streetpunk and serves as a good reminder to not overlook underrated bands like Adolf & the Piss Artists (why isn't this band huge?) and Patriot. This comp has mainstream-looking packaging (and a really dumb title) that might turn off many punks, but the bands included are just so uniformly great that you'd be foolish not to pick this up. Now I don't have to make a new mix tape for my car! Hopefully GMM will stick around long enough that there will be many more Skins and Pinz volumes. (AE)

GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

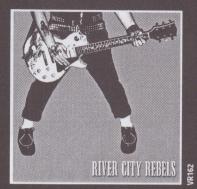
VA – This Changes Everything, CD This is a Second Nature label sampler featuring some of the best in HC, metal crossover, post-HC and other stuff. The talent on this sampler includes unreleased material by Euclid and Higher Burning Fire and previously released stuff by Kid Kilowatt, Grade, Reggie ATFE, Isis and Waxwing among others. Great intro to this label. (DM)

Want your stuff reviewed? Send it to: Punk Planet Reviews PO Box 6014 East Lansing, MI 48826



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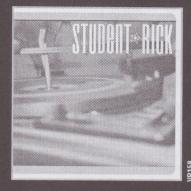
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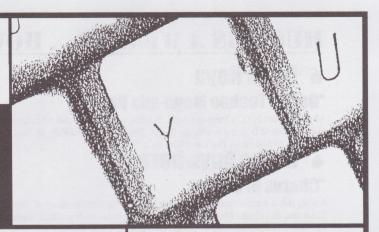
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### RED LEADER RECORDS



### PAPER

# ZINES



Alarm #9 Decent glossy covered zine with Mr. Lif, Sunny Day Realestate, Bratmobile, and International Noise Conspiracy interviews. I read this one in its entirely and can say that it gets better with each issue and will soon become on of your zines to get every issue of indeed. (EA)

\$3 Alarm Press PO Box 200069 Boston, MA 02120

Alco-Beat #6 Ah, a respite from activist zines. Don't get me wrong; I'm all for smashing the status quo and all, but goddamn, how reading about it can get old. So this zine was a nice break; it's written by a self-confessed TV lover (one who loves reality TV even) and gives recipes for mixed drinks. Of course, there's a scene report from China, a section of suggested termpaper topics (such as "They Sure Make Purdy Blankets: Navajo Indians in Contemporary Society") and some record reviews. It's a fun little zine-and dammit. we need more fun zines. (KR) 50 cents or two stamps. Alco-Beat, 415 N. Main. Apt. B. Bowling Green, OH 43402

America? #8 Introspective personal thoughts zine with lots of music references thrown in. Good to see someone relating experiences to songs that have moved them. (AS)
PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604-1077

Dunk and Piss #3 A quick-reading quarterpage zine. Stories of mall oppression, painful memories of growing up and a road trip to "Canada." There are a few interesting quotes and some briefs photocopied from The Onion. God, I love The Onion. Anyway, this zine doesn't have a whole lot to say, but it's not around long enough to get that old. (KR)
One stamp. Dunk and Piss, 11 Alger Drive,
Rochester, NY 14624

Feline Punch #1 Good first effort for this, I'm not sure how to say it, feminine, queer oriented, personal, music fanzine. Interviews with Kathleen Hanna, Rubeo, The Butchies and more. For those that care, either negative or positive, it has an fair amount of poetry. But I consider poetry not that much different than writing song lyrics. (AS)
Lauren, 217 Oak St., Brentwood, CA 94513

FTW Wry, bitter, and very, very funny. I love this kid. This collection of social commentary and well, rants is superb and must be read by more people. Also see Twat review. (DM)

\$1 Bryan Berzins 2226-b Wyoming NE #144 Albuquerque, NM 87112

Ghola #3 Personal anecdote type zine. Interesting, in as much as everything seems pretty bizarre. It all seems like a big dream to me. Good cleansing for the depressed. (AS)

638 Lehigh Rd., Apt. M-10, Newark, DE 19711

Girl and Her Bike #8 You shouldn't judge a book by its cover, because though this had a rad little cover, the writing didn't do it for me. And there was A LOT of it—IIO quarter pages to be exact. Still, it was interesting, from a story about having an MRI to Ladyfest to a lesbian quickie. (KR) \$3 Angie, PO Box 2425, Winnipeg, MB Canada

Heartattack #30 Maybe not as essential to the scene as I thought, Heartattack still has a lot of merit. This issue actually got my attention because of the LeShok interview. For some reason they sent us their hardcore zine for review after 30 issues. Its not as if anyone doesn't know they exist. (EA)
Heartattack PO Box 848 Goleta, CA 93116

Invincible Summer This zine was really imaginative! It wasn't a fanzine and it didn't really even have anything to do with music or records or politics or anything like that. That was so refreshing!! This zine is a collection of the authors writing and art from a summer spent in Portland. There's lots of funny little comics and awesome art. All stories were funny and cute and sad and just plain cool. (AA)
\$2 PO BOX 12763 Portland OR 97212

Issues Zine: Content for the Discontented A collection of angst-ridden stories, poetry, and illustrations. It was a good length but a lot of it was kinda dark and depressing though. There was one story though that included some very funny quotes from our wise and powerful leader George W. (AA)

\$2 Marisa Day34 Upton Street, Staten Island, NY 10394

The Killer Elf Zine #1 This was the cutest little zine! Another zine with the bravery not to go the fanzine, music, political route. Instead there were lots of little stories, and she even included part of her diary. Some of the stories were a little sad and made you think, but other parts would pick you up and have you splitting your stitches. (AA)

Jessica Clary, USC PO Box 80757, Columbia, Sc 29225

May 19, 1969: A Collection of Ideas #2
This mass grouping of poetry, transcribed

interviews, and letters to the editor suffers not only in its need for an editor but in the writers need for a composition class.

Anthony b. Harris is wordy and has difficulty making a point as to what his anarchist views are. He loves his girl and he loves Marilyn Manson. Not exactly thought provoking. (DM)

Anthony Byron Harris c/o Castle Hillcrest Publishing 2721 Hillcrest Avenue Macon, GA 31204

Mondo Bizarre #7 Spanish? Zine with interviews of Donnas, RFTC, Munster records, and more. Check em' out on the web first and decide for yourself, I can't read a lick of it. (EA) www.mondobizarre.com

Muddle #17 One of the best magazines out there. You want this for the interviews, which are above average: Flaming Lips, Hot Snakes, Man or Astroman?, and more. The best story is the interview with the Philly scenes 40/40 club. It is inspiring. (EA) www.muddle.com

N.O.T. The Dream Team #4 This zine was so funny! It made me laugh so hard!! All the articles were totally tongue in cheek. A lot of them had to do with stupid things people do, this part was my favorite!! (AA)
PO Box 19561 Boulder, CO 80308

Paranoize # 15 This is a dedicated metal, HC metal zine that welcomes poor writing and spelling mistakes. Features Burn It Down, Shutdown, Clearlight, Magog, Over Soul and others. Sign of the beast in the air people! (DM)

\$1 Bobby Bergeron, PO Box 15554 New Orleans, LA 70175-5554

Promenade #11 This zine has great lay outs that are clean and crisp, great photos, interviews, zine reviews and some other great stuff. However I believe it to be Dutch or Swedish, I'm not really sure though. Looks good, could be good. (DM)
Fredick Kullman, Osterlanggtan 65, 3 tr, 503 37
Boras

Recluse Zine #5 This zine had a really good variety. There were reviews, short stories, some informative articles, an interview with

Justin Sullivan of New Model Army, and more. For a buck this zine is a real value. It had a very nice layout and was very well put together. (AA)

\$1 + stamp PO Box 09558 Columbus, Oh 43209

Sideshows #1 Women oriented zine that is meant to continue the dialogue and sentiments that come from seeing the editor's band, Jane Speed. That said, it's not at all some kind of toot your own horn fanzine, but lots of informative articles. (AS)

Jen Kaminsky, 39 Chester Street, Apt 1, Allston, MA 02134

Skyscraper #9 Over 170 pages of great writing makes Skyscraper one of the best zines around. This time interviews with !!!, Rocket From the Crypt, Lyle Preslar of Minor Threat, Melt Banana and more make this a great read. I sat down and read the thing from front to back in one sitting and wanted more. The layout and interviews are excellent. It is a true fan-zine, the writing shows how much these boys love their music. (EA) www.skyscrapermagazine.com

Slave #5 They say it best on the second page of this issue "Jets to Brazil, Avail, Sean McDaniels, Art, Politics, Music." That should be enough to order this one. If not, I will add "Amazing layout, thoughtful questions, cool photos, different." There you go, order it. (EA)

Slave PO Box 10093 Greensboro NC, 27404

TapeOp #24 Every issue I have to write a review of TapeOp. Simply put I think all music lovers, engineers, bands, studio wannabes, or basically anyone who loves music (independent or otherwise) should read this zine. This issue has a cool Unwound interview for you punk rockers. Really check em' out subscriptions are free, really at www.tapeop.com. (EA)
TapeOp PO Box 507 Sacramento, CA 95812

Tsunami/Niacin #3 Has a comic about robot bands, interviews with the bands, Estel and Red Monkey, and some short personal thought pieces. Also included is the editor's first stab at political writing with an introductory piece on the Zapatista Army. While

the black on black cover was very artsy, it sure made the address hard to read. (AS) Niacin Media Empire, 9 Oaklawns, Dublin Road, Carlow, Republic of Ireland

Twat Wry, bitter, and very, very funny. I love this kid (still). This collection of social commentary and well, rants is superb and must be read by more people (I mean it, really). Also see FTW review. (DM) \$1 Bryan Berzins 2226-b Wyoming NE #144 Albuquerque, NM 87112

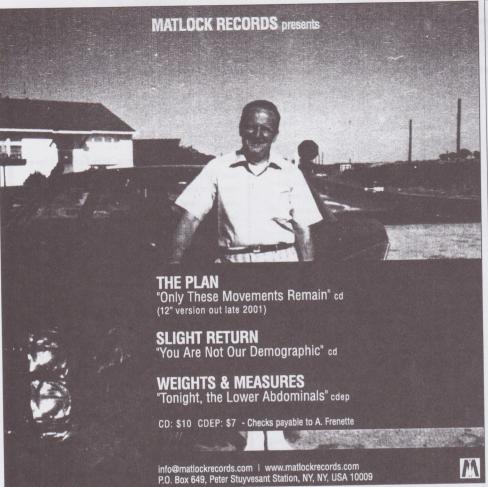
Urban Guerrilla Zine #10 "Thanks to all the punks that stay true to the scene and themselves, which doesn't include the phony Sony punks. You know who the fuk [sic] you are." That's how this half-page zine opens. Um, OK. An essay about Berkeley's recent no-flyer law by Aaron Cometbus starts the zine for real. Cometbus writes in his smooth, interesting manner, and that essay flows into another one about the reactionary nature of the punk scene-something I think isn't brought up enough. Gold star. There are a lot of hard-core record reviews, a bunch of zine reviews and a scene report, most of which feature bands I've never heard of. (KR) \$3 with CD or \$1.50 zine only. UGZ, PMB 419,

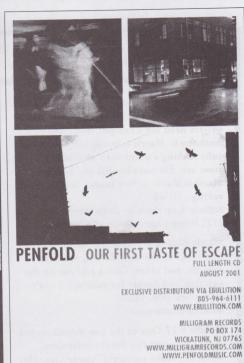
What's On the Radio #1 This zine details a hitchhiking trip two girls from Montreal took to get to Ladyfest in Olympia.

"Anyfuckingway, this was primarily written so that I and everyone mentioned had something to look back on," the author writes. It's a really detailed look into the tedium of getting somewhere by hitchhiking and all that went on during Ladyfest. You have your usual cast of miscreants on the road, but the trip seems worth it in the end. Read all about their adventures—if you were at Ladyfest, you just might be one of the people in here. (KR)

1442A Walnut St., Berkeley, CA 94709

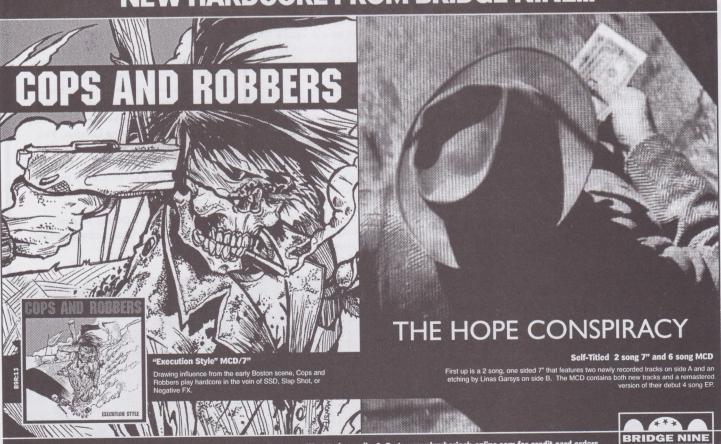
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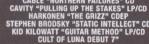


















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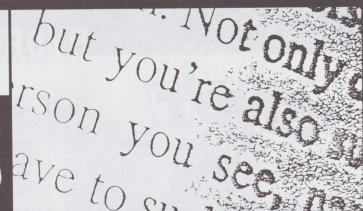


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## PAPER

# RMMKS



## Some People Can't Surf: the graphic design of Art Chantry By Julie Lasky Chronicle Books

Those of you that think punk design begins and ends with sans-serifed typefaces and blurry, moody photos of dour looking boys staring off into the distance couldn't be more wrong. While that style may dominate the current glut of indie and emo releases being churned out (and may be mimicked and replicated both in mainstream record design and in such parasitic entities as Urban Outfitters), it certainly isn't the first rung on the punk design ladder (and most certainly also won't be the last).

The work of punk artists and designers like Jamie Reid (the Sex Pistols), Winston Smith (Dead Kennedys), and Raymond Pettibone (Black Flag) still hold up over time, even if the practitioners themselves (Smith excluded) have moved on to the art world at large. A list of influential punk designers, however, would be incomplete without the most prolific among them: Art Chantry.

Often overlooked in punk circles, simply because the bands most linked to his name never achieved the mythic proportions of the Sex Pistols, the DKs, or Black Flag, Chantry has been churning out a staggering large and uncompromising body of work for the last two decades.

Most closely linked to the Pacific Northwest rock scene, Chantry has produced literally hundreds of records for labels like Sub Pop and Estrus Records (a label that Chantry has produced hundreds—if not thousands—of logos for alone).

To define Chantry's "style" is diffi-

cult, even though his pieces are instantly recognizable. In the broadest sense, he draws his cues from Americana-advertising circulars, postage stamps, '50s memorabilia-but to pigeonhole Chantry as a "retro" designer is much too limiting. While a certain segment of his work looks back to the past (as it looks to the present), another large portion of his pieces are beautifully modern (if not post-modern) in their usage of type and imagery. Chantry manages to be a wildly eclectic designer while remaining true to a singular vision. Is that's duality that makes him unique and respected (as well as reviled by some) both in punk design circles, as well as in the larger design establishment.

Some People Can't Surf, contains the largest collection of Chantry's work ever put together. There are hundreds of painstakingly crafted record covers, posters, magazine layouts, and logo designs reproduced in the book. That alone is worth the price of admission (\$27.50), as it's truly staggering to realize just how much work one man has been able to churn out in 20 years.

The volume of pieces compiled here—as well as the sheer number of quality pieces among them—speaks more about Chantry's love of his work than author Julie Lasky's above-average biography that accompanies the artwork (truth be told, it was a month or more before I bothered reading the text, as I really feel like the work itself tells all the story you need). But the narrative that Lasky has created, which is woven throughout the book, is informative and is well worth perusing once you've gotten over just how amazing the work is itself.

It's about damn time the graphic power

of punk got a quality book dedicated to it, and I couldn't have imagined a better person to receive the treatment. —Daniel Sinker

#### The Trial of Henry Kissinger Christopher Hitchens Verso

As a record of the federal government's foreign policy in South East Asia during the Vietnam War, Christopher Hitchens' The Trial of Henry Kissinger is almost unparalleled. Hitchens skillfully weaves together classified documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, interviews with Kissinger himself, and historical evidence to mount a convincing case against a high-ranking American official. With the recent indictments of Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milosevic, The Trial is of striking contemporary relevance.

Hitchens begins with a transcription of a telephone conversation between Simon and Schuster head Michael Korda and Kissinger in which the former Secretary of State worriedly relates the extradition of Augusto Pinochet by a British court to a Spanish court because of his fear that he could easily meet the same end.

Aside from such excellent anecdotal coups, The Trial makes a compelling case against Kissinger. Wondering what types of moral transgressions Kissinger might have made impel the reader forward through a slightly obtuse but astonishingly brief I50-page document. Unfortunately, Hitchens never really delivers the goods when it comes to providing specific charges that he thinks ought to be filed against the former Secretary of State. What we get instead is a very damning political biography of

So July pp46

Kissinger that provides the kind of historical information necessary for such highminded humanitarian purposes.

Hitchens introduces us to a man who will use any situation to advance his political power, regardless of the body count. Kissinger finessed the breakdown of the first peace talks with North Vietnam, extending the war another four years, which as Hitchens contends was a maneuver Kissinger craftily engineered so that he could win a position in Lyndon Johnson's government. Hitchens also spends a lot of time going over the human costs of Kissinger's foreign policy. For example, between 1968 and 1972, Kissinger authorized over 3,500 missions against the civilian populations of Laos and Cambodia using B-52 bombers. According to Pentagon figures, during that time 31, 205 American servicemen, 86,101 South Vietnamese regulars and 475,609 "enemy" troops were killed. During the same period "more than three million civilians were killed, injured or rendered homeless."

After his years in office, Hitchens recounts how Kissinger networked with his friends and associates amongst the dictators and despots of the world, amassing a small fortune with a consulting company helping to grease the wheels of international corporate growth. In The Trial of Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State ultimately emerges as a narcissistic monster responsible for the deaths of millions, placing him in the same league as 20th century mass-murderers-cumheads-of-state such as Hitler and Stalin. However, Hitchens never really "tries" Kissinger with specific charges laid out in a more legalistic fashion, even though at times he attempts to frame his biography of Kissinger in such a light. Because of that, my gut feeling is that the book would be more aptly titled, An Indictment of Henry Kissinger or Should Henry Kissinger Be Arrested? -Bill Mithoefer

#### Democratizing the Global Economy: The Battle Against the World Bank and the IMF

#### Kevin Danaher, Ed. Common Courage Press

The cover of Democratizing The Global Economy depicts a bald eagle carrying protestors with a large sign reading "Economic Justice" swooping down on suit-clad, cigar-smoking skeletons fleeing from the scene with bags of money, accompanied by their friends, the pigs. In the background lies a Romanesque building entitled "World Bank," and a typical DC federal-style office bearing the name "International Monetary Fund," both overrun by snakes. Get the idea? After I read the first few articles, a young Berkeley law student sitting next to me commented as I gazed at the cover, "That looks interesting and deeply critical . . . "

Kevin Danaher, co-founder of San Francisco's Global Exchange, has assembled a dramatic and rather down-to-earth collection of articles in this study of the Washington, DC protests of April of 2000. He neatly divides the book into three sections. "The Art and Science of Protesting Transnational Elites," "Why the World Bank and the IMF Suck," and "Where Does the Movement Go From Here?" The articles within each section contain neat sidebars, including an excerpt from Business Week critiquing global capitalism, a definition of de-globalization by Walden Bello, a quote from Steve Biko and other interesting tidbits. Amusing political cartoons also pepper the book. The editor has left very little wasted space.

"The Art and Science of Protesting Transnational Elites" contains some of the most inspiring material in the book. A 69year old Berkeley grandmother, who went to Washington to protest the lack of universal health care in America, writes about her politicization and activism getting arrested in DC. Her article is written extremely matter-of-factly in a rather amusing tone with little sentimentality about her experience of going to jail. She describes the logistics of using a false name and maintaining solidarity with her fellow protestors. She also recounts her amazement at how many young blacks are incarcerated, concluding that "The international and national media mergers, corporate farming, mining and forestry, housing development, gun control and arms sales, and even our universities and schools are all parts of the total picture."

Terry Allen shows the ways in which the DC police broke the law to keep order. Njoke Njoroge Njehu and Soren Ambrose describe the logistics of how the A16 protests were organized. Starhawk, Michael Albert and Alli Star all provide excellent assessments of A16 and how lessons learned in Seattle and DC can make future protests more effective. Several authors also deal with the corporate media's distortion of the protest's significance and police brutality during the events.

The silly title of the second section, "Why the World Bank and the IMF suck" belies the fact that this is the crux of the book. The essays in this section run the gamut from Fidel Castro's impassioned speech to the G77 group of the United Nations, to Naomi Klein's inspiring essay "The Vision Thing," which talks about the huge range of ideologies behind the protest movement from a fairly middle-of-the-road liberal point of view. —Bill Mithoefer

#### In the Shadow of the Liberator: Hugo Chavez and the Transformation of Venezuela By Richard Gott

There is a huge social experiment underway in Venezuela and few on the

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we recieve will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.

American left seem to be paying attention. The military is buying fresh vegetables and meat in the countryside and trucking it to poor neighborhoods for sale at subsidized markets. New state-run pharmacies are selling medicine at a 30 percent discount. The government now provides breakfast and lunch to children at school, which helped boost enrollment by one million over the last year. These are just a few of the social reforms began two years ago with the election of the left-leaning president, Hugo Chavez. The new leader is also trying to trim the fat of corruption and graft within the government by restructuring bodies ranging from the Judiciary to the Constituent Assembly. And Chavez initiated the recent rewriting of the Constitution, which now includes such provisions as civil rights for Venezuela's indigenous population.

Hugo Chavez, a former military colonel, has been criticized by Washington as dangerous and undemocratic largely because he attempted a coup in 1992. After his prison sentence was commuted in 1994, he continued working with both military and civilians to build a new political party, the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) inspired by Simon Bolivar, the 19th century liberator of South America. In the 1998 general election, Chavez won the presidency and his allies in the MVR took a majority in Congress.

Contrary to popular belief, the central figures in the new government are not all from the military. Take for example the compelling character of Ali Rodriquez. A former Marxist guerrilla who fought in the hills of Falcon State in the '60s, he later became a labor lawyer in the densely industrialized Ciudad Guyana. Rodriguez now serves as Chavez's Minister of Energy and Mines, in charge of the nation's enormous oil industry. By reorganizing Petroleos de Venezuela, Rodriguez has been able to flip the trend away from increased privatization toward stronger state control. With rents from oil being Venezuela's main revenue source (Venezuela is America's number one supplier), petroleum earnings are crucial for the economic survival of this unevenly developed country. According to Gott, oil

revenue is the main source of funds for Chavez's "Bolivarian" development projects.

Anyone interested in this still unfolding drama should read Richard Gott's new book, In the Shadow of the Liberator. This engaging, detailed but fast-paced book explains the rise of Chavismo in Venezuela. The story opens with the insane 1989 Caracazo-citywide riots and looting by the urban poor triggered by IMF required price increases. The rage behind this eruption had been brewing for generations and it signaled a chance to implement changes Chavez and his people had been working on for years. Gott goes on to investigate the popular unrest-mostly amongst poor civilians and the lower ranks of the military-and the key players that help fuel Chavez's eventual electoral landslide. Most impressive are Gott's up-to-date reporting and interviews with Chavez and many of the president's closest allies and critics. -Heather Rogers

## Left Book Club Anthology Paul Laity, Ed. Victor Gollancz / Weidenfeld and Nicolson

The story of the Left Book Club is a publisher's—or a politician's—wet dream.

Established in London in 1936 by Victor Gollancz, with editorial back-up from writer-politicians John Strachey and Harold Laski, LBC became a political movement in its own right. It was far more than a British version of Book of the Month Club with a left slant. LBC held mass national rallies, assembled a network of 1,200 member clubs in Britain and beyond, sponsored 40 clubhouses, ran intellectual summer camps, and even had the odd swimming team. All this, and it made Victor Gollancz a quite prosperous publisher too. His colleagues Strachey and Laski went on to become, respectively, cabinet minister and chair of the British Labor Party.

LBC published books by the millions. Their orange-cover mass-market hard-backs became a staple of intellectual life in Britain. Today, those 250-plus LBC volumes are hard to come by in British used books shops. One friend takes particular

delight in his collection of a couple dozen aging volumes. "Got them all for five quid at a yard sale. Used bookshops sell them for eight pounds apiece," he reported happily. LBC titles covered politics, economics, and nearly any topic that a reformer with a typewriter could think. Keeping track of these titles and their reprints is the stuff of specialist bibliography.

Besides the likes of roving thinkers like George Orwell and Arthur Koestler, the LBC authors list carried future prime minister Clement Atlee and eight post-war Labor ministers. LBC emerged at a particularly ripe moment in pre-war Britain when the abominable Baldwin government was proving itself entirely incapable of advancing social reforms demanded by the Depression and confronting fascism, particularly in Spain. LBC established itself with the express purpose to "help in the struggle for world peace and a better social and economic order, and against fascism."

LBC membership rapidly catapulted to 57,000, and its volumes, covering a myriad of topics, leaped off the presses. Often credited with being a major influence in shaping the massive social reforms of postwar Britain, the basic ideas of the UK's social welfare state—the National Health Service, education reforms, industrial nationalization—were all explored in LBC books. Although this anthology does not reprint the programmatic materials that have dated, it is in many senses a requiem for a publishing project that succeeded in midwifing such profound and beneficial changes.

Paul Laity, an editor at the London Review of Books, has written an excellent and succinct historical introduction to this anthology. From a wealth of possible texts for inclusion, he has assembled a selection that provides a reasonable sense of LBC's list and the Popular Front-influenced argumentative milieu it advanced. Given the massive array of possible texts for inclusion, Laity provides an incredibly intelligent selection of work that helps show what an astonishing intellectual debt remains owed to this remarkable 1930s leftist publishing house. —Joe Lockard

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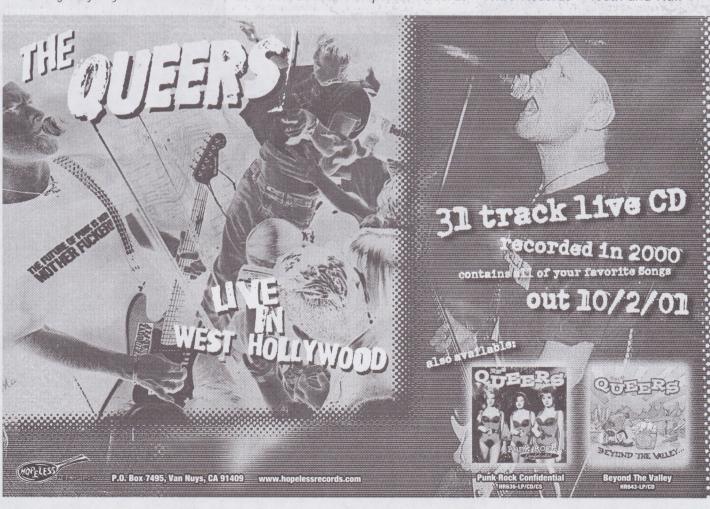


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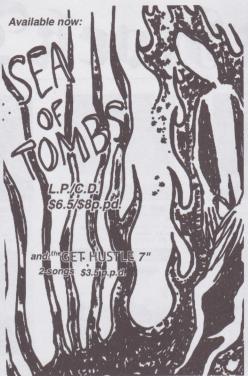


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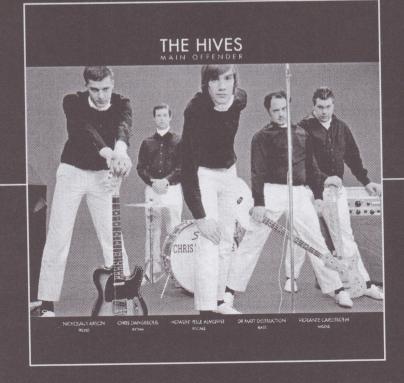
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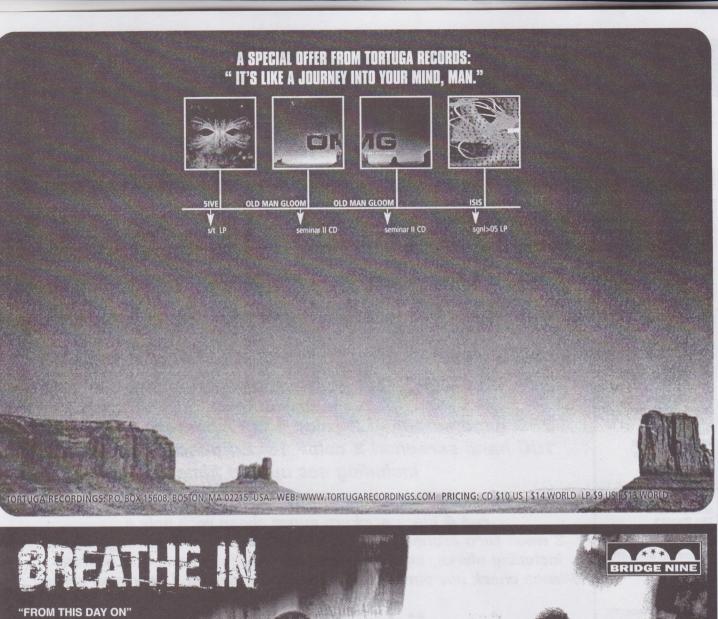


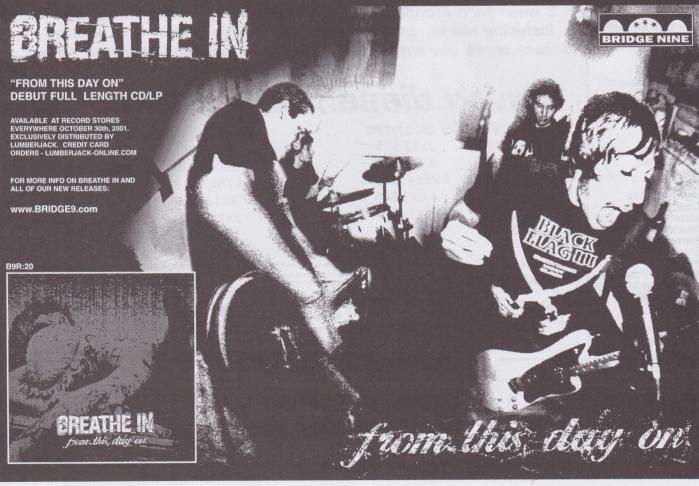
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PP33 Sept./Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING INSTRU-MENT, THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JADE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIJUN. ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC: "Ghosts of Tienanmen," AN INSID-ER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE: "Broken Vows" A COMPELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRAIGE: and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 takes an indepth look at THE WARPED TOUR, PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue. Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REP-LIKANTS, CADILLACA, OPERATION IVY's JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more-exce[t fpr reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER, the frontman of punk legends THE CLASH. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNG-FISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE, the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE'S DR. FRANK, the

mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more, 152pgs

PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PLINK IN AMARII -LO TEXAS. Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interveiws with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN. TAPE OF MAGAZINE. LIMPWRIST and SARGE's ELIZA-BETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more, 144 pgs

PP37 May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles, PP37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COM-PLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control." Interviews in this issue STELLA MARRS: J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN: STEPHEN DUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CON-TROL COMMITTEE: Q AND NOT U; **EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER;** and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won, Finally, PP37 takes a look at the SAD STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA AND MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

PP38 July/August 2000 VOICES OF THE NEW LEFT. PP takes a look at the new anti-globalism movement.

Interviewed in the "Voices" series are NOAM CHOMSKY, JELLO BIAFRA. DIRECT ACTION NETWORK, RUCKUS SOCIETY, QUEER TO THE LEFT and GLOBAL EXCHANGE. Also interviewed in this issue, BOY SETS FIRE UNWOUND talk about building their new recording studio, post-hardcore label HYDRAHEAD RECORDS, controversial publisher SOFT SKULL BOOKS, MELVINS bassist Joe Preston talks about his project THE THRONES, electronic artist LESSER checks in and art rockers LES SAVY FAV yap at you. Also, PP38 takes a look at the growing RAPTIVIST movement, Additionally, PP38 looks at the GROWING ANTI-WALMART MOVE-MENT, Much more, 156 ngs.

PP39 Sept/Oct 2000 Six years

after punk "broke" into the mainstream, Punk Planet talks to many of the bands involved, GREEN DAY, JAWBREAKER JAWROX SAMIAM GIRLS AGAINST BOYS. THE SMOK-ING POPES, FACE TO FACE, JIMMY EAT WORLD, TEXAS IS THE REASON. Think you know what happened? Think again. Also in this issue: interviews with KILL ROCK STARS founder SLIM MOON: THE EXPLOSION: MARY TIMONY; SUE COE; ULTRA-RED; DISINFO.COM; and the CEN-TRAL OHIO ABORTION ACCESS FUND. Articles in this issue include a look at how groups like the WTO ARE EFFECTING THE LIVES OF THE GREAT APES: a report on the CHICA-GO POST-ROCK SCENE; and noted economist Doug Henwood writes "BOOM FOR WHOM" which puts a new perspective on the "new" economv. 152 pgs

PP40 November/December '00. MEET THE NEW BOSS Through interviews with controversial biographers, Punk Planet #40 envisions the hell that the Bush presidency will beand the hell that a Gore presidency would have been. PP40 also features interviews with INSOUND.COM; The Fucking Champs' TIM GREEN; ELEC-TRICAL AUDIO; Anarchist theorist JOHN ZERZAN; MARCELLE DIALLO: VERSO BOOKS: MILEMARKER: and MATMOS. Articles in PP40 include a look at the WAR THE GOVERNMENT IS WAGING AGAINST THE NAVAJO INDIANS in Big Mountain, AZ, the

PLIGHT OF C NUMBER PRISONERS IN ILLINOIS and a look back at WEL-FARE REFORM. 152 pgs.

PP41 February 2000 PUTTING DC ON THE MAP. PP4I takes a look at the history of the DC punk scene. From the influence of the Bad Brains to the birth of Minor Threat: from a violent Ian MacKaye to a not-yet-Rollins Henry Garfield. PP4I offers a revealing and detailed look into punk's past. Interviews in pp41 include: (INTER-NATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY THE WIPERS, THE LOCUST, TNI BOOKS, and DIY reggae pioneers RAS RECORDS. Articles in PP41 include a look at POETRY SLAMS and a devastating look at the BOMBING OF A COLOMBIAN VILLAGE, Additionally in PP4I is an inspiring talk with SUE MECCA, a 40-year-old punk rock mom. Plus, DIY tips, columns, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs.

PP42 FINDING LIFE ON DEATH ROW Too often the story of state killing has been told through statistics-these unique conversations with three people who have been to death row (two are still there) bring readers beyond the numbers and into the cell itself. Interviews in this issue include: AMPHETAMINE REPTILE RECORDS calls it quits. SAMIAM. JETS TO BRAZIL'S JEREMY CHATELAIN talks about his solo work, filmmaker ANDREW DICKSON, members of the powerful Seattle band THE GITS look back at the death of their singer Mia, and hip-hop culture mag BLU keeps it real. Also interviewed in PP42 is ALI ABUNIMAH. a young Palestinian activist who has helped turn the media tide during the latest Arab uprising in Israel. Articles in PP42 include a look at the growing anti-psychiatry movement--are drug companies convincing us we're sick in order to turn a profit. The revealing DIARY OF A PHONE SEX WORKER lets readers peer into the world on the other side of the receiver. And PEDAL POWER chronicle's one woman's travels into the radical pro-bike movement. PP42 also includes all the columns, reviews, DIY and more that you've loved over the years. 136 pgs.

36 page cover section gives readers DIY tips on how to edit digital video, how to set up a low-power radio station, how to record audio, how to program HTML, how to build a web-based audio feed, how to shoot video, how to program Flash animations and much. much more. In addition to those tips BECOME THE MEDIA also looks at the history of the INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER, who are setting the media world on end. BECOME THE MEDIA also features pieces about YOUTH MEDIA, the ZAPATISTAS AND TECH-NOLOGY, NEWSREEL, and COMMU-NITY ACTIVST TECHNOLOGY. This issue is a must have for anyone interested in the new media revolution. Also featured in PP43 are interviews with radical historian HOWARD 7INN rockers ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT (fresh off being dumped from a major label), "emo diaries" kingpin DEEP ELM RECORDS, author SHAWNA KENNY, who wrote I WAS A TEENAGE DOMINATRIX, laptop rocker KID 606, religious zealots THE CAUSEY WAY. and the masterminds behind the PUP-PET STREET PROJECT. Additionally, PP43 features all the stuff readers have come to expect over the last seven years: columns, reviews, and

PP43 BECOME THE MEDIA PP43's

much more. 144 pgs. PP44 THE WEAKERTHANS, one of the finest punk outfits to come along in the last few years grace the cover of PP44. This interview, performed by longtime Punk Planet contributor Larry Livermore, probes the mind of Weakerthans frontman JOHN SAMSON. In their conversation, Livermore and Samson go from poetry to revolution and back again. Truly an engaging and inspiring talk with one of punk's newest heroes. Also interviewed in this issue: MR LADY RECORDS is profiled through talks with the label owners and the artists they release; futuristic hiphop duo DELTRON 3030; Pacific Northwest metal punk LORDS OF LIGHTSPEED; electronic music pioneer THOMAS DIMUZIO; HALF JAPANESE's legendary JAD FAIR: Pacific Northwest politi-rockers THE INTIMA; and \$5 CD label PLAN-IT-X RECORDS. Articles this issue include: UNIVERSAL RECORD'S ACQUISITION OF E-MUSIC-it may

not sound all that exciting, but this business-section errata finds many independent labels not so independent anymore; reporter Heather Haddon looks at the ABUSE OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN AMERICA; new associate editor Chris Ziegler gives a hilarious behind-the-scenes look at SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST; PID INVESTIGATES SLAUGHTER OF WILD BUFFALO IN MONTANA; and PUNKS REMEMBER JOEY RAMONE in a moving tribute. All this, plus all the DIY, columns, reviews, and much much much more! 144 pgs.

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# 3(4)

#### Where to find more information about this issue's features.

#### **INTERVIEWED THIS ISSUE:**

#### Jaime Hernandez

Jaime's amazing Love & Rockets comics are available at comic stores everywhere. However, if you can't find them at your local retailer, try his publisher:

Fantagraphics Books 7563 Lake City Wy NE Seattle, WA 98115 1.800.657.1100 www.fantagraphics.com

#### Gee Vaucher

Pla

Joel :

Chris

Eric

Scott

Leah

Shav

Frol

issn

Gee's work is collected in the book *Crass Art* and *Other Pre Post-Modernist Monsters* it is published by:

AK Press PO Box 40682 San Francisco, CA 94140 www.akpress.org

Crass's music available from Southern Records: PO Box 577375 Chicago IL 60657 www.southern.com/southern/label/CRC/

#### **Elliott Earls**

For more information about Elliott and the Apollo Program, visit: www.theapolloprogram.com

Elliott's fonts are also available from Emigre: 4475 D Street, Sacramento California 95819 www.emigre.com

#### Nikki McClure

Nikki has some amazing stuff for sale, including artist books, note cards, and a 2002 calendar. You can get her stuff from: www.buyolympia.com

#### **Pond Gallery**

Pond is located at: 214 Valencia st, San Francisco, ca 94103 e-mail: pondpeople@mucketymuck.org www.mucketymuck.org

#### Sadie Shaw

The soundtrack to *Charm* is out now. It is available from 5 Rue Christine records: PO Box 1190
Olympia, WA 98507-1190
www.5rc.com

Charm itself should be out by the time you read this.

#### Jay Ryan

Jay can be written at: PO Box 25441 Chicao IL, 60659

his website is: www.thebirdmachine.com

#### **Shepard Fairey**

The Shepard Fairey empire begins at: www.obeygiant.com

#### **ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE:**

#### Drawing a Blank

Artists profiled in the article:

Janelle—Desperate Times
POB 4047, Berkeley, CA, 94704

Nate Powell—Walkie Talkie
7205 Geronimo, North Little Rock, AR, 72116

Fly—CHRON!C!RIOTS!PA!SM! and
Fuck the Shut Up
POB 1318, Cooper Stn., NYC, NY, 10276
www.bway.net/~fly

Carrie McNinch—The Assassin and the Whiner POB 481051, Los Angeles, CA, 90048 asswhine@hotmail.com

Nick O'Teen—The Collected Nick O'Teen Comics n\_oteen@hotmail.com; www.bentcomics.com

The following distributors carry the works of the above artists, as well as work of many others:

Stickfigure POB 55462, Atlanta, GA, 30308 www.stickfiguredistro.com

Insound www.Insound.com

Last Gasp 777 Florida St., San Francisco, CA, 94110 www.lastgasp.com

Cold Cut Distribution (retail only)
475-D Stockton Ave., San Jose, CA 95126
www.coldcut.com

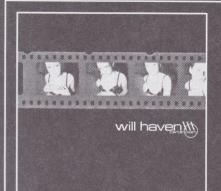
#### The Murals of Pilsen

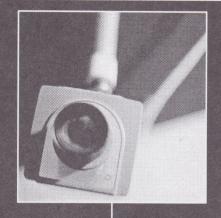
For more information about the art of Pilsen, visit the Mexican Fine Arts Museum: 1852 W. 19th Street Chicago, Illinois www.mfacmchicago.org

#### Books on the Run

To learn more about projet MOBILLIVRE—BOOKMOBILE project (or to find out if it's coming to your town), visit their website: www.studioxx.org/bookmobile









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\*Noam Chomsky Art & Design I lived with the system and took no offense until Chomsky\* lent me the necessary sense.